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RESTAURANTSUSA

A Different View
of the
50+ Market

NRA MEETINGS

SEMINARS

Basic Foodservice Courses

Dining Room Management
10/20 Appleton, WI
10/27 Louisville, KY
11/17 Monterey, CA
11/19 Sacramento, CA

Dining Room Management: Sales and Service
10/21 Appleton, WI
11/18 Monterey, CA
11/20 Sacramento, CA
12/1 Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Kitchen Management
10/21 Albuquerque, NM
11/18 St. Louis, MO
11/20 Columbus, OH

People-Power and Profits
11/17 St. Louis, MO

Tools for Training
11/10 Cincinnati, OH
11/12 Detroit, MI
12/9 Harrisburg, PA

Food Production Courses

Perfecting Your Culinary Skills
10/28 Denver, CO
11/11 Wilmington, DE
12/9 Salt Lake City, UT

Simplified Baking Workshop
11/11 Norfolk, VA

Soups and Sauces
11/10 Concord, NH
11/11 Warwick, RI
12/8 Des Moines, IA
12/10 Cheyenne, WY

Foodservice Management Courses

Banquet Management
11/3 Baltimore, MD
11/17 St. Louis, MO
12/2 Tampa, FL

Beverage Management
11/5–6 Seattle, WA
11/18–19 Louisville, KY

Employee Motivation
11/10 Ft. Worth, TX

Food Cost Management
11/3 San Diego, CA
11/18 St. Louis, MO
12/2 Austin, TX

Foodservice Operators Legal Workshop
11/10 Minneapolis, MN
11/17 Nashville, TN

Menus That Sell!
11/5 Newark, NJ

Negotiating for and Financing Foodservice Facilities
10/16–17 Raleigh, NC
11/5–6 Madison, WI

Off-Premises Catering
10/28–29 Cleveland, OH
11/5–6 West Palm Beach, FL
12/3–4 Chicago, IL

Operational Analysis
11/12–13 Indianapolis, IN

Planning and Implementing Restaurant Marketing Strategy
10/21–22 Minneapolis, MN
11/17–18 St. Louis, MO

Planning Successful Buffets
10/27 Bethesda, MD
10/28 Philadelphia, PA
12/4 Jacksonville, FL

Real Estate and Restaurant Site Selection
11/12–13 Portland, OR

Restaurant Design and Facilities Planning
11/10–11 Denver, CO

Wine and the Bottom Line
11/3 Boston, MA
11/18 Rochester, NY
12/8 La Jolla, CA
12/10 Santa Barbara, CA

NATIONAL CONFERENCES

National Conference on Catering
11/16–19 New Orleans, LA

Independent Foodservice Operators' Conference
1/18–21/87 San Francisco, CA

National Conference on Computers in Foodservice
3/8–11/87 Dallas, TX

For more information, contact NRA Education Programs 311 First St., N.W. Washington, DC 20001 (800) 424-5156 or (202) 638-6100

STUDY GROUP MEETINGS

Financial Officers
10/15–17 Williamsburg, VA

Marketing Executives
10/19–21 New York, NY

Tax Executives
10/15–17 Williamsburg, VA

Quality Assurance
10/22–24 Boston, MA

For more information on specific study groups, contact Philip Kralovec, (312) 853-2525.

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RESTAURANTS USA
VOL. 6 NO. 9 OCTOBER 1986

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G. "Jim" Hasslocher
President
Frontier Enterprises
San Antonio, Texas

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

G. "Jim" Hasslocher, President
Frontier Enterprises, San Antonio, Texas

Nationwide promotion launched

The whole hospitality industry—foodservice, lodging and their suppliers—has created what promises to be one of the largest promotions in our history. You will receive a packet concerning this nationwide promotion this month.

Yours will be one of 55 thousand hospitality businesses invited to join in a promotion designed to celebrate the hospitality industry employee. By introducing this promotion in your establishment, you will be participating in a nationwide campaign designed to demonstrate that our industry is a source of great career opportunity for a wide variety of people.

The packet, which you will receive before the end of October, contains samples of the materials you will need when you launch this promotion. I urge you to examine these materials carefully and to order the posters, ad mats, envelope stuffers, pins and bumper stickers you need to change the way your employees and, ultimately, your community look at our industry.

Educational foundation created

During its fall meeting, the association's Board of Directors voted to merge its educational programs department with the National Institute for the Foodservice Industry (NIFI) and to create a new entity within the association to be known as the Educational Foundation of the National Restaurant Association. The plan was previously approved by the NIFI Board.

The new educational foundation will continue the work of both predecessor organizations. It will bring seminars and conferences to the association membership and provide prospective employees with information and support as they seek careers in foodservice. The merger is designed to guarantee the enhancement of these programs and the introduction of new ones.

This merger is another aspect of the association's determination to broaden and strengthen its services, according to its five-year strategic plan.

Task force looks at ingredient labeling

The Board also called for the appointment of a special task force to coordinate industry action in regard to legislation calling for mandatory ingredient labeling on fast food and take out wrappers. Although we all believe that consumers have the right to know what is in the food they purchase, ingredient lists on wrappers are not the right vehicle for this information. That is a supermarket response to a restaurant problem. The new task force will explore the appropriate response to the limited demand for this kind of information.

Members talk with political leaders

The Board meeting was followed by the association's very successful Public Affairs Conference at which members heard from leading political figures, such as Secretary of Labor William E. Brock, Secretary of Health and Human Services Otis R. Bowen and Senators Edward M. Kennedy and Pete V. Domenici. Attendees then met with their own senators and congressmen on Capitol Hill.

They also spent time with their legislators during the highly popular *Chef D'Oeuvre* reception at which eight leading Washington restaurants served signature samples to 255 congressmen and senators.

This kind of direct contact between political leaders and foodservice operators is the best way to make the wants and needs of our industry known in the nation's capital. We are already planning the third annual Public Affairs Conference for next fall. You ought to be there.

Operating ratio study released

In September, the association released the *1986 Restaurant Industry Operations Report*, which contains operating data for the various categories of foodservice outlets. Members who participated in the study have received their copies and are comparing their own operating ratios with similar restaurants. Other operators can purchase the study through the association's publications department.

Catering conference scheduled

Catering continues to grow both as an independent business and as a side business for many restaurants. The association's National Conference on Catering, scheduled this year for November 16 through 18 in New Orleans, is also growing in popularity. It is not too late to register. For more information, call the education programs department in the association's Washington office.

During September, 156 foodservice operators and allied suppliers joined us as members of the National Restaurant Association. Welcome. Your participation in the association will make your business grow and will make the association more effective in its endeavors on your behalf.

Sincerely,

G. Jim Hasslocher

G. "Jim" Hasslocher
President & Chairman of the Board

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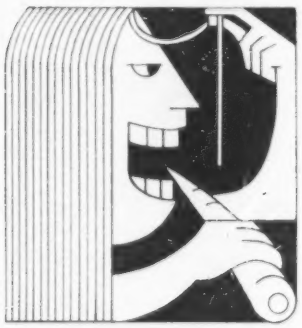

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Does an apple a day keep the doctor away? Find out the truth about some favorite folk tales.

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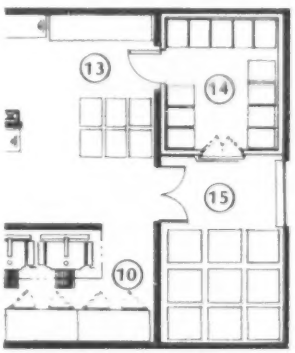
25 Considering commissaries
Because recent legislation has made commissaries more economically feasible, this two-pronged feature focuses on the benefits commissaries can offer smaller operations, and it reviews the pertinent points to consider before developing a central kitchen.



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Cover photograph by Gary Landsman

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SHORTORDERS

New NRA one-stop reference source

Foodservice Numbers: A Statistical Digest for the Foodservice Industry is a new NRA publication. The 75-page report contains a comprehensive overview of the most sought-after industry numbers. It includes:

□ industry food and beverage sales and purchases for 50 separate sectors

□ consumer research highlights from NRA's extensive research program

□ characteristics of the restaurant occasion

□ restaurant operating ratios

□ industry trends and

□ major economic indicators.

Report highlights

The report includes comprehensive information in all sections. Some examples follow:

□ Sales for table service restaurants climbed to $55.1 billion in 1984 from $13.3 billion in 1970.

□ The vast majority of decisions to eat out are made at home. Children and teenagers have considerable influence on decisions to eat at fast food restaurants.

□ Changes in restaurant traffic and sales have mirrored economic growth, with an especially strong showing in 1984. Traffic and sales growth slowed in 1985, similar to the overall slowdown in the economy. Breakfast sales and traffic growth outpaced other meal periods for three consecutive years.

□ Nearly two-thirds of all restaurant meals are consumed in less than one hour.

To order

The complete 75-page report is now available. The cost to NRA members is $50 (plus 10 percent shipping and handling), and the cost to nonmembers is $100 (plus 10 percent shipping and handling). Residents of Washington, DC, must add a six percent sales tax. Illinois residents must add seven percent. Chicago, IL, residents must add an additional one percent sales tax, to total eight percent.

To order, contact NRA, 311 First St., N.W., Washington, DC 20001, or call (800) 424-5156 or (202) 638-6100.

Payment must accompany all orders. Credit card telephone orders are accepted. Please specify number CS025.

First month's coverage for NRA life insurance only $1

Until January 1, 1987, NRA members, key employees and/or spouses under 55 years of age can enroll in the NRA-endorsed $30,000 Group Term Life Insurance Plan for just one dollar for the first month of coverage simply by meeting very minimal eligibility requirements.

Acceptance is guaranteed during this special enrollment period as long as the applicant is under 55 years of age and has no pre-existing conditions or history of high-risk illness.

The cost of the plan after the first month is kept low by spreading the risk over several thousand insureds instead of one individual. It starts at $5.20 per month per $30,000 worth of coverage.

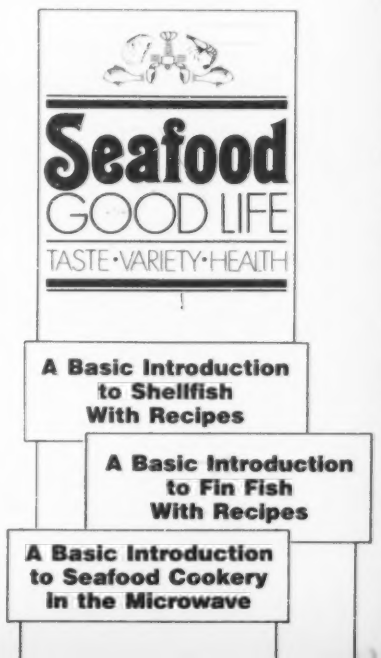
Special features of this plan include guaranteed conversion rights and guaranteed renewability to age 70. Also, members need not enroll for spouses to remain eligible.

Complete details of the plan have been sent to all NRA members. Further information is also available by contacting Albert H. Wohlers & Co., NRA Group Insurance Plans, 1500 Higgins Rd., Park Ridge, IL 60068-5750; (800) 323-2106. Illinois residents can call (312) 698-2221.

Free seafood pamphlets available

"Seafood for the Good Life" is a series of informational brochures recently developed by the National Fisheries Education and Research Foundation. The series focuses on basic information in four areas: shellfish, finfish, seafood microwave cooking and seafood nutrition—one topic per pamphlet. Included are recipes as well as purchasing, storage and cooking tips.

To receive camera-ready masters for reproduction or a sample set of the brochures free of charge, contact the Foundation at 2000 M St., N.W., Suite 580, Washington, DC 20036; (202) 296-5090.


Seafood
GOOD LIFE
TASTE·VARIETY·HEALTH
A Basic Introduction to Shellfish With Recipes
A Basic Introduction to Fin Fish With Recipes
A Basic Introduction to Seafood Cookery In the Microwave

Hospitality industry to launch image campaign

On October 17 in New York City, officers of 15 national associations representing 55,000 businesses will announce an all-out, industry-wide campaign aimed at elevating the perception of the hospitality industry employee. The National Restaurant Association is among the sponsors of the program, which has been described as the largest cooperative effort ever undertaken by the service segment of our economy.

In conjunction with the program's announcement, National Restaurant Association members as well as members of the other sponsoring associations will be receiving a packet which outlines the program and explains how it can be implemented in their establishments. Look for the packet, as well as the November issue of ***Restaurants USA***, for full details on this broad-scale, industry-wide campaign.

Restaurant central kitchen rule hailed as industry victory

Certain restaurant central kitchens are exempt from federal meat and poultry inspection requirements, according to the final rule on this issue published by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Hailed as a decisive victory for restaurants, the rule is expected to reduce costs and remove an obstacle to centralizing food preparation for restaurants. The final rule went into effect September 19, 1986.

The ruling exempts kitchens that ship ready-to-eat foods to local establishments owned by the same person or persons. "Ready-to-eat" foods, according to USDA, are those that require no further cooking or other preparation, except reheating prior to service if the food has been chilled for transportation.

The allowance for chilling and then reheating transported "hot foods" comes after NRA's vehement opposition to a provision in the proposed rule issued by USDA last year. Under that proposal, an exempt central kitchen would have been required to ship food at its serving temperature—food intended to be served hot, for example, would have been required to be shipped hot.

This requirement, NRA argued, would increase the possibility of bacterial contamination and would raise costs by necessitating special equipment and awkward scheduling.

The final rule comes two years after Congress passed NRA-backed legislation which lifted federal inspection requirements for restaurant central kitchens. At that time, NRA successfully argued that federal inspection laws often duplicated state and local regulations and that inspection costs discouraged restaurants from taking advantage of the efficiency that results from centralized preparation of some products.

USDA's two-year delay in coming up with the rules to implement the legislation, however, has been a continued source of frustration for restaurant commissary operators.

Dee Ruma, a St. Louis restaurateur who owns eight delicatessens, cooks and slices all her meats in a central kitchen. Because her commissary services more than two retail units, it has fallen under federal inspection requirements. A federal inspector has maintained a desk in Ruma's commissary since 1981.

Dee Ruma

Highly stringent federal laws, Ruma said, have complicated her attempts to open her kitchen earlier or to make changes in the brands of meats she uses or in kitchen design. Her plans to open a second commissary have been on hold for one year while she was waiting for USDA to make its final rule exempting central kitchens. Building a commissary according to federal guidelines, she said, would entail an extra $50,000.

USDA estimates that at least 40 restaurant central kitchens will be affected immediately by the final rule, which applies to interstate as well as intrastate food transportation. The rule also exempts vending machine suppliers and caterers from federal inspection.

Facilities exhibiting problems meeting sanitation requirements, however, could be forced to resubmit to inspection by USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service.

Operators who wish to be exempted from federal inspection should contact their local USDA inspector. Requests for exemption should be made in writing, and a final determination on the request will be made by USDA in Washington. NRA members are urged to send a copy of their request to the NRA Government Affairs Department, which will be monitoring the exemption process.

Editor's note: *See related stories on planning a commissary in this issue.*

FDA panel favors ingredient disclosure in restaurants

Representatives for NRA and three restaurant chains argued against mandatory fast food labeling at an Aug. 21 public hearing before the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on Hypersensitivity to Food Constituents. Other industry groups, a physician, consumers and the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) also appeared before the panel, which will make a final report to FDA in March 1987.

At the conclusion of the hearing, the committee recommended that FDA develop a practical means of making ingredient information conspicuously available at point of purchase in *all* restaurants. Committee members cited labels, wall charts and brochures as disseminating vehicles. They also recommended that FDA encourage that nutrition information be made available at point of purchase.

The ad hoc group's recommendations are not expected to be the final word, however. Dr. Sanford Miller, director of FDA's Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, told the panel that the cost of enforcing the recommendations would have to be weighed heavily in view of current budgetary constraints.*

Left to its own creativity, the industry will respond to consumer demand for ingredient information, NRA said. NRA pointed out that six fast food chains, which represent more than 43 percent of total U.S. fast food sales, have announced that they will begin providing ingredient information to their customers in the next several months.

***Editor's note:** *In fact, as this issue of* **Restaurants USA** *went to press, FDA announced it had rejected CSPI's petition requesting that packaged fast foods be labeled. (More details will follow in the next—November—issue.)*

Senator Armstrong discusses the tax reform bill

Earlier this year, Senate Finance Committee member William Armstrong (R-CO) took up the foodservice industry's cause in its fight to preserve the deduction for business entertainment expenses at 100 percent. On May 6, 1986, the vote on Sen. Armstrong's amendment to retain full deductibility fell short by just one vote.

Recently **Restaurants USA** *spoke to the senator about his involvement in the business meal issue and the outcome of the tax reform bill.*

Restaurants USA: **You came incredibly close (a 9–9 tie vote) to winning approval for your amendment in May. What were your thoughts going into that vote, and, looking back on it now, was there anything that could have been done differently to pick up an extra vote?**

Armstrong: A lot of restaurant people contacted the senators on the Finance Committee, and we made the case not only on the grounds of theory and justice but on very practical grounds—that it would hurt the economy.

It's pretty hard to know whether some additional information, argument or persuasive presentation would have given us another vote. At the time, I felt pretty good about it. I thought we had the facts on our side. We had a very logical reason for why it was foolish to limit the deductibility of entertainment expenses.

It was my feeling that the 80 percent proposal was discriminatory in its very essence. In effect, the committee made a policy judgment that one kind of business expense should be fully deductible—such as billboards, TV advertisements, newsletters, direct mail, etc.—but that others should not be fully deductible. That's discriminatory on the face of it, and it puts the Senate Finance Committee in a position of exercising a judgment that it simply is not qualified to make. It's unjust, unwise and sets a precedent which I expect the Senate will come to regret.

The next thing we'll have to face is whether certain kinds of advertising expenditures should be disallowed. There's already a bill pending that would disallow the deductibility of cigarette advertising. Then, someone will say we've got too many lawsuits and that we should disallow 20 or 40 percent of legal fees. What we end up doing is setting an industrial policy for the country based upon what fraction of a particular expense is tax deductible.

Q: Do you think the negative image the business meal sometimes has with the general public influenced the Senate Finance Committee vote?

A: For years some people in politics have made a point of ridiculing the "three martini lunch." Yet, at least in the finance committee, I think the issue appealed to the members' sense of justice. I've never seen a businessperson drink three martinis at lunch. My observation is that businesspeople today tend to be very moderate both in what they eat and drink and how long they

spend doing it. In today's competitive environment, the last thing someone wants to do is take a long lunch. But this buzzword, "three martini lunch" has conjured up the notion of nearly unlimited revelry, with people taking from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. for lunch. If that's the case, why allow 80 percent of it? If it's business, it ought to be 100 percent deductible; if it's monkey business, none of it should be deductible.

"Sooner or later we'll get enough people in Congress who will either vote for a balanced budget amendment, or will vote to refer it to the people for a vote."

Q: What's your opinion of the tax reform bill ?

A: I think it's a pretty good bill, although there are many things in it that I would have done differently. Still, seeing the maximum individual rates come down to 28 percent is really remarkable. According to figures I have seen, approximately 90 percent of the taxpayers in my state will pay less under the bill. I assume that's fairly typical across the country.

Q: The big unknown in the equation is how the tax bill will affect the economy. What's your perception?

A: I've got a hunch that its immediate impact will not be entirely favorable. Because of the way it's timed, the immediate effect will be a slight increase in taxes in the first half of next year. Also, in doing away with the investment tax credit and some other things, we don't encourage new investment. Moreover, the whole bill increases the burden on businesses as a group—some will pay more than they do now, some less—but the idea is to shift the tax burden toward businesses and away from individuals. That will encourage consumption to some extent, but it won't encourage new plant investment. So the outcome is somewhat chancy.

However, in the long run, by lowering the marginal rates, we have dealt a devastating blow to tax shelters. We've said to people that if you can live with a 28 percent top rate, you don't have to fool around with all these exotic tax schemes. We're encouraging people to invest their time and efforts in things that produce the maximum economic return. In the long run, that's good for the taxpayers and good for the country.

Q: Will there be another tax bill next year, possibly a "technical corrections" bill?

A: I think there will be a technical corrections bill about one yard thick. You are also going to see quite a few substantive changes proposed, and I'm going to propose some of them myself. There are some things in the tax reform bill that just don't make sense, and anybody who has the idea that we are not going to pass another tax bill doesn't understand how this process works.

Q: Do you foresee any rate increases, possibly to help lower the deficit?

A: There will be a big push for higher rates, but I would be surprised to see higher personal rates anytime in the foreseeable future.

Q: What about a national sales tax or consumption tax?

A: It's possible, but again I think the President will resist any overall increase in the tax burden. He might give some ground on it, and, if he does, we'll get it. There is a great deal of sentiment for a tax increase. I don't share that sentiment. I don't think a tax increase will narrow the deficit; it would just permit everyone to get off the hook and spend more.

Q: What would your approach be to reducing the deficit?

A: Cut spending. Cut spending. Cut spending.

Q: You've been a proponent of the balanced budget amendment. Is that really a solution?

A: Look around the country at all the states that have balanced budget amendments. They balance their budgets. It may require politicians to do things they don't want to, but one way or another these states will meet their constitutional responsibilities. If we had it in our constitution, we'd do it. Lacking that, we won't.

Q: Can the Gramm-Rudman deficit reduction act accomplish the same thing?

A: It's a Rube Goldberg contraption. It's a terrible idea, but it is a better approach than doing nothing. Gramm-Rudman is a form of external discipline.

Sooner or later we'll get enough people in Congress who will either vote for a balanced budget amendment or will vote to refer it to the people for a vote. I think when that happens, the state legislatures will ratify it.

Restaurateurs active in small business conference

More than 1,800 small business owners converged on Washington, DC, for the second White House Conference on Small Business. Thirty restaurateurs participated in the four-day event, which focused primarily on hammering out 60 recommendations to the President and Congress on issues affecting the small business community.

The delegates to the conference spent much of their time in issue sessions, debating the merits of the 373 recommendations proposed during earlier state conferences. In the end, the delegates—representing every area of the private sector—forged a consensus on what will be the small business agenda for the remainder of this decade. (See sidebar for a listing of the top 10 recommendations.)

Liability insurance top concern

It came as no surprise that liability insurance reform was ranked as the number one priority for small business. All of the restaurant delegates interviewed by ***Restaurants USA*** were concerned about tort reform. "That's the big issue, not only for restaurants, but for all businesses," said NRA Honorary Director Michael O'Neal of the Ginger Man Group in New York, NY. John Weichman of All Seasons Restaurant in Mobile, AL, could not agree more. "There's no question about it. You hear the horror stories daily—and mine's no exception," he said. "We have to have some kind of protection or else it's going to kill dining out in America as we know it."

NRA Honorary Director Ernie Royal of Ernie's Grill in Rutland, VT, maintains that liability insurance "is just eating up too much of our profits. If I didn't have to pay so much on liability insurance," he added, "I could afford to spend more on my staff."

The delegates recommended a four-pronged approach to liability reform: civil justice changes, uniform fault-based liability standards, increased regulation of the insurance industry and a greater public awareness of the effects of litigiousness on everyday life.

"If they pass these bills requiring maternity leave and extended health care, they're going to be taking it right from the bottom line."

—Gretchen Mathers

Mandated employee benefits a key issue

Gretchen Mathers, owner of a cafeteria and catering operation in Seattle, WA, shared the others' concern with liability insurance but said she had another issue uppermost on her mind: recent efforts in Congress to establish government-mandated employee benefits.

"I'm terribly concerned that Congress is starting to overlegislate in this area—to the point where we won't be able to pay the fringe benefits," Mathers said. "Our profit percentages aren't that high in this business. If they pass these bills requiring maternity leave and extended health care, they're going to be taking it right from the bottom line. It's going to be a killer if it goes through."

Mathers was not alone in her concern. Government-mandated employee benefits was ranked as the second most serious issue facing small businesspeople. The delegates voted overwhelmingly to oppose such bills as the Parental and Disability Leave Act, H.R. 4300, and efforts to require employers to pick up the cost of health insurance when employees are laid off.

Tax reform not among top 10

Although on the minds of many delegates, tax reform was not one of the top 10 recommendations, perhaps because work on the tax bill was completed by a House-Senate conference committee just prior to the delegates arriving in Washington.

However, the delegates did call for the restoration of the Investment Tax Credit (ranked 16), which would be eliminated by the tax bill, and the establishment of a capital gains tax rate of 75 percent of the regular income tax rate if an asset is held for two years and 50 percent of the income tax rate if an asset is held for

five years (ranked 12).

Many small business owners were of the opinion that tax reform will be of little benefit to them, and Gene Colonna of the Chicago Connection Delicatessen in Muscle Shoals, AL, expressed the concern of the group. "The bill is not in the best interests of small business," he said. "There are many issues wherein we obviously had no input or influence, particularly in the area of capital gains and investment. Congress seems to have forgotten that small business has been the chief engine of economic growth in the last few years."

"Drugs are not just in the ghettos and poor neighborhoods anymore. Users are from all walks of life, including small business employees."

—Ed Davidian

Many of the restaurateurs pointed to the 80 percent limit placed on business meal deductions as an example of Congress' insensitivity to small business concerns. In fact, one of the 373 conference recommendations called for a 100 percent deduction for business meal and entertainment expenses, but it did not make the final 60.

Teaching youngsters about free enterprise

Another important issue—number six on the list—was education and training about the free enterprise system. The delegates urged the federal government to establish an early awareness of the free enterprise system in grade school.

"Better education and training are an absolute must," Royal said. "I can't overemphasize the importance, especially in the restaurant business. Our industry gives many young people their first opportunity in a work situation, and these folks just aren't properly motivated or trained."

Ollie McClung, owner of Ollie's Barbeque in Birmingham, AL, said he was pleasantly surprised to find that others were as concerned about education as he was. "In my opinion, we have a nation of economic illiterates—from college-educated people on down to blue-collar workers. There has to be a greater emphasis on the free market system in the schools," he said. "If we ever want to be competitive with the Japanese, we have to begin changing attitudes about business."

SBA applauded

Several restaurateurs were also concerned about the future of the Small Business Administration (SBA), which the Reagan Administration has said should be eliminated. Mathers said she has qualified for several SBA programs that have helped her expand her business. William Moon, president of Iowa 80 Truckstop, Walcott, IA, said he thought SBA is particularly helpful in states where there is high unemployment. "SBA's ability to provide advice as well as financial help is an important key to small business growth," he said. "Young people today need SBA as a resource to help them get off the ground."

White House Chief of Staff Donald Regan, in his keynote address to the conference, tried to mend fences with the delegates on the SBA issue. He emphasized the importance of small business in the nation's economic recovery and promised that the President would appoint a permanent SBA administrator soon. The delegates, in a recommendation ranked 13, said SBA should be an independent agency and that the SBA administrator should be elevated to Cabinet-level status.

Drug-free work force ranked 17 on list

A "dark horse" issue championed by Ed Davidian, Country Manor Restaurants, North Canton, OH, rose to number 17 on the list. Davidian was able to galvanize support for a recommendation calling for a joint effort by government, businesses and schools to bring about a "drug free" work force.

"I see this as a huge issue, especially in the restaurant industry," Davidian said. "Drugs are not just in the ghettos and poor neighborhoods anymore. Users are from all walks of life, including small business employees."

All of the restaurant delegates said they will push for enactment of the conference recommendations this fall and next year when the 100th Congress convenes. "I believe the momentum established here will carry us forward," Weichman said. "There will definitely be follow-up. We have to follow up, or we're going to be in trouble."

—Jay Morris
—Denise Roach

Small business's top 10 priorities

Delegates to the White House Conference on Small Business selected the following as their top recommendations to Congress and the President:

1. Reform tort laws, establish uniform fault-based liability standards and increase regulation of the insurance industry.

2. Oppose federally mandated employee fringe benefits.

3. Protect small business from government and nonprofit competition.

4. Balance the federal budget and reduce the federal deficit.

5. Create a federal department of trade.

6. Promote education about free enterprise and global economics in schools.

7. Repeal the Davis-Bacon Act.

8. Reform Social Security.

9. Pass S. 2760, the Product Liability Act.

10. Make disputes with IRS subject to binding arbitration, and make IRS pay for the cost of its errors.

The FORGOTTEN Generation

Marketing to the over 50 crowd

by Anne Papa

A couple in their mid-fifties set out one evening to enjoy dinner in a restaurant. The first place they stopped seemed more like a bar than a restaurant, filled with young people hoping to see and be seen. The second place was filled with families with children, and it was ill-suited to a couple dining alone. And the third restaurant featured exotic, heavily spiced items which did not appeal to the couple's traditional tastes.

Anne Papa is a communications specialist for the National Restaurant Association.

Discouraged, the pair ended up at a restaurant they had been to many times before. It was the only place in town that offered the elegant atmosphere, quality food and attentive service that the older couple desired. It was the only place in town that the couple would recommend to their friends.

A neglected market

Too old to be called baby boomers and too young to be called senior citizens, consumers between the ages of 50 and 65 are an "historically neglected market," according to Barbara Caplan, vice president of Yankelovich Clancy Shulman, a market research firm that conducts demographic marketing studies.

"When developing marketing strategies, businesses consistently overlook this age group," says Caplan. "It's as though the baby boomers are the only game in town."

Ironically, this neglected market is potentially the most lucrative. Today, 33 million Americans are between the ages of 50 and 65. That number will grow considerably, however, as the baby boomers grow older. According to the Conference Board, by the year 2000, the 50 to 65-year-old group will surge to 41 million, the biggest increase of any age group.

But the real strength behind this mature age group lies in their spending power. Generally, these consumers are at their peak earning years, commanding higher average salaries than any other age group. Yet their expenses have lessened considerably. The children are grown and gone, the mortgage is paid off, and the financial strains of running a household are reduced. As a result, these mature consumers also have the most discretionary income. The Conference Board estimates that consumers between the ages of 50 and 65 spend 20.1 percent of their income on items considered non-essential, compared to a 16.5 percent overall average.

The wants and needs of the mature consumer

What do these facts mean to foodservice operators? Plenty, according to Jasper White, owner of Restaurant Jasper (Boston, MA; 80 seats). "Money is no object to these consumers," he says. "Their primary reason for going out to eat is that they're hungry. Therefore, the restaurateur must identify exactly what these customers are looking for in a restaurant—and then give it to them."

For upscale restaurants, such as Restaurant Jasper, it is not difficult to woo the mature consumer. The qualities that appeal to this affluent group—elegance, first-class food and drink, attentive service—are the very qualities that define an establishment as being upscale. But what about restaurants that have made their niche as the trendiest spot in town or as a great place to bring the kids? How can operators of these establishments tap into the lucrative mature market without completely repositioning their concepts?

Fred Hipp, president of the casual dining division of Gilbert/Robinson, Inc., which operates 62 Houlihan's units nationwide, acknowledges that marketing to mature customers can be difficult—but it also can be done. He echoes Jasper White in maintaining that the key is to first identify what mature consumers look for in a restaurant. "This age group has definite characteristics," says Hipp. "By zeroing in on those characteristics, you're better able to position your operation to meet their needs."

Creating a private, intimate atmosphere, even in the midst of a bustling lunch or dinner crowd, is a surefire way to please mature patrons.

Catering to the mature customer

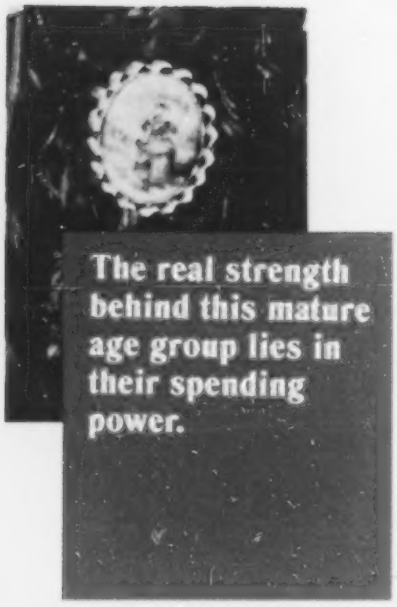
The characteristics, which Hipp, White and operators like them have observed among their mature clientele, are based on a desire for quality and a willingness to pay for it. There are specific steps you can take to communicate a quality image to this discriminating but profitable market.

☐ **Be consistent.** Older consumers are more likely to establish loyalty to one particular establishment than are younger consumers, who are more inclined to try new places. To win this loyalty, however, customers must find consistent quality in both food and service.

NRA Director Don O'Neill, owner of the Spring House Restaurant (400 seats; Rochester, NY), estimates that at least 50 percent of his clientele are among the affluent, older generation. Recently, he placed comment cards on each table in the restaurant, asking customers to evaluate food and service. "Time and time again," O'Neill reports, "those cards came back with one word written on them—'consistency.' Particularly among the older clientele, customers come back to the Spring House because they know what to expect."

Restaurant chains have an advantage in this area because consistency of food and service from one unit to another has always been considered a top management priority. Certainly, consistency is what draws older customers into 16 Ruth's Chris Steakhouse units across the country, according to Ruth Fertel, owner of the New Orleans, LA-based concern. "Many of our customers are older, affluent businessmen and business women who travel a lot," says Fertel. "They know they can fly to a new city, take a client to one of our restaurants, which is completely consistent with the one they've been to back home, and make a good impression."

☐ **Give personal attention and recognition.** Because mature customers are loyal and therefore regular restaurant patrons, personal recognition and attention to their particular wants and needs are a must. "We make a point of learning our customers' names," says Don O'Neill of the Spring House Restaurant. "Whether they are leaders in the business community or



The real strength behind this mature age group lies in their spending power.

a couple from the neighborhood out for a nice meal, we treat everyone with the same respect." O'Neill also makes certain that special requests regarding food or service are "taken care of immediately."

NRA Director Arthur McGreevey, owner of Llewellyn Farms, a 190-seat upscale restaurant in Morris Plains, NJ, agrees that giving older customers specialized attention is a definite factor in their patronage. "We have some older customers who insist on sitting at the same table and having the same waiter every time they come in," he observes. "We say, 'No problem.' We only want to make them happy."

☐ **Offer privacy.** In contrast to the younger generation, for whom dinner at a restaurant is often tantamount to a night on the town, older clientele are more likely to prefer peace and quiet when dining out. Creating a private, intimate atmosphere, even in the midst of a bustling lunch or dinner crowd, is a surefire way to please mature patrons.

Gordon Sinclair, owner of Gordon (145 seats) and Sinclair's (125 seats) in Chicago, IL, and Sinclair's American Grill (135 seats) in Jupiter, FL, says he makes an effort to seat his older customers at more secluded tables. "They might not specifically request it, but we've found older customers are generally appreciative of tables that are far apart," he says. "Only rarely do we seat them in the center of the restaurant or near the piano."

Fred Hipp believes that the privacy available to diners in Houlihan's restaurants is a significant factor in the chain's appeal to mature consumers. "Unlike a typical theme restaurant, where the bar takes center stage, the bar and dining areas at most Houlihan's units are separated by a wall," notes Hipp. "This way, customers who come in for a private dinner are not forced to adapt to a bar-like atmosphere. We recognize that red neon lights and contemporary music aren't for everyone, so we give our customers an option."

☐ **Provide soothing decor, music and lighting.** Mature customers generally prefer establishments that are conservatively decorated, maintain soft music levels and are adequately lit.

International House of Pancakes (IHOP), a North Hollywood, CA-based, 461-unit chain which has recently repositioned itself to also capture the lunch and dinner market, has undergone a change in decor. "We recognized that if we wanted to attract a wider customer base, particularly older customers, we needed to soften our traditional 'formula' look," explains Steve Pattise, vice president of marketing. Consequently, the familiar peaked roof has been replaced. The old orange-and-blue color scheme has been abandoned for off-white, rust and blue. Many of the dining rooms have been carpeted, and light oak furniture adds a sophisticated touch. "It is now a lot more likely that an older couple will come into an IHOP without children—and not just on a Saturday morning," says Pattise.

Conservative, low-level music is also generally preferred by an older clientele. Fred Hipp of Houlihan's observes that many restaurants, both casual and upscale, are already recognizing this fact. "Music has come down a decibel level or two in the past few years," he observes. "Older groups, from baby boomers on up, will no longer tolerate music that interferes with their conversations."

Adequate lighting, too, is important, especially for those older patrons who wear glasses or, as Arthur McGreevy of Llewellyn Farms puts it, "those who simply want to know what they're eating."

☐ **Serve traditional menu items.** In keeping with their preference for a conservative atmosphere, 50 to 60-year-old customers are more likely to choose traditional, tried and true menu items. This does not mean that eclectic menus hold no allure for this group. It simply means that, in general, mature patrons are less likely to experiment with the unknown. Therefore, it is a good idea for restaurants that specialize in exotic dishes or heavily seasoned ethnic foods to also feature a few traditional items.

Although all Gordon Sinclair restaurants feature regional American cuisine, Sinclair has modified some menu items at his Florida restaurant to suit older tastes. For instance, Cajun dishes, which are prepared with heavy spices up North, are tempered a bit, and traditional specials, such as a weekly seafood buffet, are featured in Florida, but they are not offered in Chicago.

Don O'Neill of the Spring House Restaurant does not include spicy dishes, such as blackened redfish, on his menu in deference to his older customers. "We generally try to remain current with our menu, but the Cajun trend is one I decided to forego," he explains. "I knew there would be some difficulty with our older clientele."

Beverage preferences also differ among the age groups. At Gordon and Sinclair's in Chicago, for example, frothy drinks, white wine and champagne cocktails are the big sellers. But at Sinclair's American Grill in Florida, a customer is more likely to order a Rob Roy or an old-fashioned.

☐ **Promote healthy items.** Many customers 50 years old and over are concerned about good health. Either as a result of their own inclination or because of doctors' orders, these consumers are looking for menu items low in sugar, fat and sodium.

Recognizing this trend, Houlihan's has introduced a new "light and healthy" section on its regular menu. The section includes poultry, seafood and vegetable items that appeal to the health-conscious consumer. Reports Fred Hipp, "We have noted a definite increase in orders from this section from customers 55 years old and older. These consumers are also more likely to order salads or fresh fish off of our regular menu." Hipp notes, however,

A Closer Look at the MATURE MARKET

In 1970, there were 39 million people 55 years old and older; by 1985, they numbered 51 million—a 31 percent increase. Although growth will be at a slower rate in upcoming years, this population group will continue to be one of the fastest growing. Not only are there more mature consumers today, but they also are more affluent, healthy and active than previous generations. Failing to target this market means ignoring the segment with the most discretionary spending power, potentially a very costly mistake.

that these older consumers also tend to order dessert at the end of a meal. "Older consumers are believers in the traditional edict: 'eat three square meals a day.' So when they skimp on one area of a square meal by ordering a light item, they're likely to view dessert as a way to round out the meal," he theorizes.

Even without a separate section of the menu for light items, special preparation requests by older patrons should always be honored. Jasper White, Don O'Neill and Arthur McGreevy all report they are quick to accommodate special dietary requests—and they all enjoy the loyal patronage of mature consumers as a result.

☐ **Be sensitive to the age issue.** Finally, when catering to mature consumers, it is important to take age sensitivity into consideration. A customer 50, 55 or even 65 years old may resent being classified as "old" and will resent any marketing efforts that are based on "old people" stereotypes.

Gordon Sinclair says that tact and discretion are important when marketing to mature consumers. At Gordon, discount meals are offered before the dinner rush for customers who might be going to the theater afterward. "Since going to the theater costs money, most of our pre-theater crowd is affluent, and therefore older," explains Sinclair. "But we would never promote the discount meal period as an 'early bird special.' That term implies old age. Instead, we simply call it our 'pre-theater special,' which says value in a more sophisticated manner." A similar pre-dinner-hour special at Sinclair's American Grill in Florida is called *Sinclair's Sampler.*

Looking ahead at the aging baby boomers

For those who would still argue that "the baby boomers are the only game in town," it is at least prudent to keep in mind that these 30 and 40 year olds won't stay young forever. The operator who positions himself or herself now to cater to an older clientele is the operator who will come out ahead as the baby boomers mature.

"Ten years from now, 'older clientele' will have a whole new meaning," predicts Fred Hipp of Houlihan's. "They will still want privacy and a conservative atmosphere. They will still opt for traditional food and drink. But they will also bring their own baggage, their own values, acquired from their years as the predominant generation." Hipp projects that baby boomers, accustomed to a more cosmopolitan and fast-paced life-style, will continue to eat out far into their older years. "As older customers, they will make up a much larger percentage of the dining out public than their predecessors do now," he predicts.

Don O'Neill of the Spring House Restaurant also recognizes that the aging of the baby boomers will have a significant effect on his market in the coming years. "I feel confident that we will maintain our niche as the mature market grows," he says. "But I also know that I can't make assumptions about older clientele 10 years from now based on what I observe today. If baby boomers at age 50 or 60 want their blackened redfish, we'll give it to them. If they want their milk shakes served upside down, we'll give it to them.

"Because," he adds, "the key to pleasing older clientele—the key to pleasing any clientele—is to pay attention to their wants and needs." ❑

Tips for marketing to mature consumers

Although each restaurateur must develop marketing strategy based on the unique aspects of his operation and the characteristics of the local market, here are some general tips to keep in mind when targeting mature consumers.

1. Avoid old age stereotypes.
2. Recognize the diversity of the market.
3. Create a relaxed, comfortable atmosphere.
4. Train staff to be attentive, friendly and sensitive to any special needs of older patrons.
5. Offer lighter menu items, such as meats and vegetables without heavy sauces. Salad bars are also a big hit with mature patrons.
6. Use promotions such as two-for-one specials or other full-meal type deals. Senior citizen discounts are useful in attracting consumers 65 years old and over.

Kate Conroy is a research specialist for the National Restaurant Association.

by Kate Conroy

What is the "mature" market? It is one market made up of three segments: those between the ages of 55 and 64 (44 percent), those between the ages of 65 and 74 (33 percent) and those 75 years old and older (23 percent). Unfortunately, much of the information about the mature market is lumped together either encompassing all adults over 55 years of age or all adults over 65 years of age, making it difficult to get a clear picture of each segment.

Needless to say, the concentration of mature consumers can vary substantially by state, city and even trading area. Although the South has the largest proportion of the total mature market, the Northeast has the highest concentration of persons over 55 years of age, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. About one-third of those persons age 55 and older reside in the South, accounting for 21 percent of the region's total population. In contrast, about one-fourth of the mature market resides in the Northeast, making up approximately 24 percent of all residents in that area.

Marital status, employment drop with age

Marital status, labor force participation, financial well-being and physical mobility influence this segment's life-styles and thus their consumption behavior.

Marital status, for instance, is believed to influence life expectancy and overall outlook on life. According to social scientists, married persons living with their spouses tend to live longer and are often happier and more active than their single counterparts. As might be expected, the proportion of married couples decreases with age. More than three-fourths of those between the ages of 55 and 64 are married. The figure drops to less than two-thirds for those between 65 and 74 years of age, and in the 75 and older segment, the proportion of singles exceeds the proportion married—59 percent versus 41 percent. Of the singles in each age segment, the majority are female. Many are active, thanks to the development of various social clubs/organizations designed especially for seniors.

As might be expected, labor force participation is also inversely related to age. Those under 65 years of age are much more likely to be working than their older counterparts. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 68 percent of the men and 42 percent of the women between the ages of 55 and 64 were working in 1984. In contrast, just 16 percent of the men and eight percent of the women 65 years old and over were active in the labor force that same year. Projections call for the number of mature workers to decline in upcoming years as the trend toward early retirement gains momentum.

However, some experts argue that this tendency may be offset by more companies retaining older workers as consultants or part-time help. Some may even start second careers as retail and foodservice operations recruit seniors to offset a shrinking teenage labor pool.

Mature consumers have money to spend

Today's older Americans are more affluent than any previous generation. Although they grew up during the economically deprived Depression years, as adults they took part in an era of unprecedented economic activity. Despite comparatively low education levels, many pursued careers which enabled them to accumulate savings and assets. Furthermore, a majority of them did or still do participate in employer-sponsored pension plans. These monies, coupled with the rapid expansion of federally sponsored income and medical support programs, allow most people in the mature segment to enjoy a relatively high standard of living.

One clear measure of the changing fortunes of older Americans is the decline in the number who fall below the poverty line. As recently as 25 years ago, approximately one out of every three older Americans lived below the poverty line. By 1984 only one in eight was so classified. Old age no longer automatically leads to poverty. In fact, evidence suggests that age really has very little to do with an individual's standard of living. Today's old poor most likely were yesterday's young poor.

Household and discretionary income by age

Individuals between the ages of 50 and 65 have the most discretionary income

Age of head of household	Average household income	Per capita income	Average household discretionary income	Per capita discretionary income
Total U.S.	**$25,211**	**$ 9,338**	**$ 9,827**	**$3,444**
Under 35 years	22,180	8,120	7,529	2,628
35 to 49 years	31,756	9,162	10,379	2,904
50 to 54 years	34,093	11,365	11,691	3,685
55 to 59 years	30,050	11,557	11,878	4,494
60 to 64 years	25,011	11,369	10,752	4,571
65 to 69 years	19,918	9,960	9,804*	5,219
70 to 74 years	16,250	9,028		
75 years and older	13,547	8,467		

*Includes all households headed by persons 65 years old and older

Source: *Midlife and Beyond*, The Consumer Research Center, The Conference Board, 1985

Moreover, the income of older households goes further than that of younger ones because they are often smaller in size and have fewer large financial burdens. Households headed by persons between the ages of 55 and 59 have average per capita incomes of $11,557, the highest across all age groups. Although the level declines for older households, only those households headed by persons 75 years old and older have less income than households under age 35. Discretionary income*—the income beyond that which is needed to maintain a reasonable standard of living—is very high relative to younger households. This means older persons have a good deal of buying power. According to The Conference Board, more than 50 percent of the nation's discretionary income is held by householders age 50 and over. In contrast, householders under 35 years of age hold just one-fifth of the total. On a per capita basis, households headed by persons 65 and older have the most discretionary income. Those headed by persons between the ages of 50 and 64 have less than their older counterparts, but they still have more than younger householders. Failing to target this market means ignoring the segment with the most discretionary spending power, potentially a very costly mistake.

1985 population distribution

Twenty-one percent of the population is 65 years old or older

Age group	Number of persons (in millions)	Proportion of total population
Total U.S.	**239.3**	**100.0%**
Under 18 years	63.0	26.3
18 to 24 years	28.7	12.0
25 to 34 years	42.2	17.6
35 to 44 years	31.8	13.3
45 to 54 years	22.6	9.4
55 to 64 years	22.3	9.3
65 to 74 years	16.9	7.1
75 years or older	11.5	4.8

*Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.
Source: *Statistical Abstracts of the United States, 1986*, U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1986

The Consumer Research Center of The Conference Board and the U.S. Census Bureau have defined discretionary income as the amount of money which would permit a family to maintain a standard of living comfortably higher than the average for similar families. A household is deemed to have discretionary income if its spendable income (income after taxes) exceeds that of households of similar income, size, age and area of residence by 30 percent or more.

Few older persons have serious health problems

Advances in medical technology and increased awareness of diet and exercise have produced an older generation that is much healthier than in years past. In fact, when asked about their health, most mature people say they are doing well. A survey conducted by the American Council on Life Insurance found 70 percent of those between the ages of 50 and 64 rate their health as good or excellent; and, according to the National Center for Health Statistics, more than half the persons 65 years old and older say they do not limit their physical activities because of health problems. The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) supports these findings. According to AARP studies, only three percent of those between 50 and 64 years of age need help performing personal care and/or home management activities, and just seven percent of those 65 to 74 years old require this type of assistance. It is not until they reach age 85 and older that a substantial portion—four out of 10—has need of assistance.

Overall, the majority of older Americans are robust and pursue activities eagerly. Traveling is at the top of the list. AARP has found that older persons set aside $20 billion for travel in 1985, and about seven out of 10 passengers on cruise ships were age 50 or over. Because they have few time constraints, they are frequent off-peak travelers.

The travel industry has divided the mature market into two major groups: 50 to 64 year olds and those 65 years old and over. The younger group, in general, is less money-conscious than the older group and tends to travel to more luxury destinations, hotels and resorts. The older crowd, on the other hand, tends to move in groups probably because there are more singles in this segment. This propensity for traveling is good news for the foodservice industry since travelers spend money for restaurant meals.

While at home, older Americans are active golfers, swimmers, tennis players and joggers, and they are carving out exciting life-styles vastly different from their counterparts in years past.

Spending for restaurant meals has increased

The argument that mature consumers do not eat out as often as do younger individuals holds true, but it seems to be changing. For example, the National Restaurant Association's *Meal Consumption Behavior Study* found that 55 to 64 year olds eat, on average, 3.0 meals out per week, and those 65 and over eat 1.8 restaurant meals per week. Both figures are below the average of 3.7 meals per week. However, *Consumer Expenditure Survey*** results reveal spending for meals and snacks away

from home by older households has increased in recent years. According to the 1980/81 survey, households headed by persons between the ages of 55 and 64 spent $14.70 per week for restaurant meals, but by 1982/83 they were spending $20.31—a 38 percent increase. Not only did the dollar amount spent on meals and snacks away from home increase, but so did the proportion of the total food budget spent on dining out—up from 29 percent in 1980/81 to 34 percent in 1982/83. It is important to note that the average income of households in this age bracket increased nearly $10,000 during this period, and this may account in part for the dramatic increase in spending for restaurant meals.

Dining out also captured a greater share of the weekly food budgets of households headed by persons age 65 and over. In 1980/81, these households spent $8.47 per week at restaurants or 24 percent of their total food budget. By 1982/83, this group's expenditures for restaurant meals had risen 22 percent.

Mature consumers prefer family restaurants

Where do mature consumers go when they eat away from home? National Restaurant Association research has found that they most frequently patronize family or moderately priced restaurants. NRA's *Nutrition Concerns and Restaurant Choices Study* shows that in early 1986 more than 40 percent of the mature group's restaurant occasions were at moderately priced restaurants compared to 31 percent for all consumers. Mature consumers are less likely than younger people to patronize fast food places. Still, more than four out of 10 of their restaurant visits were to fast food restaurants. Older consumers, 65 and older, are more likely than their younger counterparts to visit upscale restaurants.

***The Bureau of Labor Statistics has used the* Consumer Expenditure Survey *to track consumer expenditures since 1888. Prior to 1980, the survey was conducted every 10 years but has since been conducted on an annual basis. The results discussed here are from the Diary portion of the survey for the years 1980/81 and 1982/83. These results exclude travel expenditures for food away from home.*

Percent of occasions by restaurant type

Older adults frequent moderately priced and fine dining restaurants more often than the population as a whole

	Fast food	Moderately priced	Fine dining
All adults	58%	31%	11%
55 to 64 years			
Males	47	39	14
Females	44	44	12
65 years and older			
Males	42	43	15
Females	48	46	6

Source: *Nutrition Concerns and Restaurant Choices*, National Restaurant Association, 1986

Mature consumers may prefer moderately priced restaurants, but evidence suggests they are expanding their horizons. Although they may be less likely than their younger counterparts to visit new restaurant concepts, many more of them are giving specialty restaurants a try. National Restaurant Association's study *New Restaurant Concepts, 1986*

Patronage of specialty restaurants*

Bakery items, barbecue, pasta and ice cream are top favorites with 55 to 64 year olds

	55 to 64 years old		65 years old and older	
Specialty restaurant	1985	1986	1985	1986
Hot dogs	na**	36%	na**	34%
Bakery items	na**	43	na**	41
Pizza delivery	25%	29	13%	22
Barbecue	30	1	28	43
Pasta	28	37	16	29
Gourmet hamburgers	21	27	15	22
Premium, hand-dipped ice cream	28	31	22	35
Diet/lite menu items	24	26	23	25
Asian fast food	17	22	15	22
Freshly baked cookies	18	20	18	16
Gourmet, ready-to-eat take out foods	12	20	11	20
Mexican-style chicken	13	14	7	12
Cajun, spicy cooking	9	14	6	9
Display cooking in front of patrons	12	11	9	10
Mesquite grilling	3	6	3	5
Sushi or sashimi	3	5	5	3

*Proportion of adults who patronized during first three months of 1985 and 1986
**na: not asked
Source: *New Restaurant Concepts*, National Restaurant Association, April 1985, July 1986

Use of restaurant promotions

Two-for-one and complete-meal specials are the most successful promotions with the 55-to-64-year-old segment

Type of promotion	Percent very or somewhat likely to use	
	55 to 64 years old	65 years old and older
Two-for-one specials	50%	40%
Cents-off coupons	37	39
Complete-meal specials	40	30
All-you-can-eat specials	36	19
Price reductions for midweek dining	31	29
Introductory menu item promotions	23	13
Early bird specials	22	22
Games and sweepstakes	9	8
Premiums and non-food merchandise	6	8
Special events in restaurants	13	12
Senior citizen discounts	28	44

Source: *Consumer Reactions to and Use of Restaurant Promotions*, National Restaurant Association March 1982

showed more consumers 55 years of age and older patronized specialty restaurants this year than they did in 1985. In fact, patronage increased for the older set for 10 of the 14 concepts included in both the 1985 and 1986 survey. The concepts that made the biggest gains with the older group were barbecue; pasta; gourmet, ready-to-eat take out foods; gourmet hamburgers and Asian fast food. These results suggest that while mature adults may not be the first to try new concepts, they can be won over in time. Nonetheless, the specialty restaurants mature adults patronized most frequently in 1986 included those offering bakery items, barbecue, hot dogs and premium, hand-dipped ice cream.

Mature consumers like to feel at ease when dining out

Good food, offered at a reasonable price and served by attentive, yet not overly aggressive, personnel are the qualities mature consumers are attracted to in restaurants. According to a Gallup survey, poor quality food and service are top reasons why older patrons will choose not to return to a restaurant. NRA's *Consumer Expectation Studies* reveals that older restaurant patrons like to dine in a familiar place where the staff makes them feel at ease. They tend to place a greater emphasis on interaction with restaurant personnel than do younger patrons, probably because they have more time to spend enjoying the occasion. Also dining out offers some older people, especially singles, much-desired social contact.

According to a focus group study conducted for NRA, other expectations mature customers have regarding food and service include:

- ☐ not having to wait for a table or being pushed into a lounge, especially when they have a reservation
- ☐ attractive presentations
- ☐ a quiet, relaxed atmosphere, including comfortable seating, fresh flowers and plants, properly adjusted room temperatures and
- ☐ cleanliness.

Effective promotions for mature consumers

Although mature consumers are not as likely to take advantage of deals as their younger counterparts, they are receptive to certain types of promotions, according to NRA's study, *Consumer Reactions to and Use of Restaurant Promotions*. In general, this market tends to be price/value conscious· therefore promotions that offer mature consumers more for their money tend to be more effective. The younger portion of the market, the 55 to 64 year olds, are most likely to take advantage of two-for-one specials and complete-meal specials. The older segments prefer senior citizen discounts as well as two-for-one specials. Cents off coupons and all-you-can-eat deals are also good promotions to target the 55-and-over market.

Nutrition concerns mirror mainstream

Adjustments already being made to adapt to society's changing attitudes toward health and nutrition may be all that is required to meet the dietary needs of the mature market. A recent study on health and nutrition found that many of the attitudes and behaviors of mature consumers are not that different from the younger patrons—although they are held to more strongly. At least nine out of 10 adults felt they are very or somewhat informed about health and nutrition.

Attitudes about restaurant fare were also quite similar for younger and older consumers. Consumers of all ages agreed that eating fruits and vegetables was important, and only a slightly larger proportion of older adults prefer broiled to fried foods than do those under age 55. Salad bars are favored by at least eight out of 10 adults under age 65 and by about six out of 10 adults 65 years old and older. More 55 to 64 year olds, however, wish restaurants offered more menu items for persons on restricted diets than do their younger or older counterparts.

A new challenge

Marketing to mature consumers represents a new challenge for many restaurateurs. The stereotypical view of the poor, frail older person who desires only life's necessities no longer holds true. The market today is a lively one, characterized by healthy, active people who have the means to indulge themselves. Attracting this market is not easy because of its diversity. However, operators who recognize its potential and take time to gather information about their food preferences and dining habits may be well rewarded both now and in the future as this market grows even larger. ❑

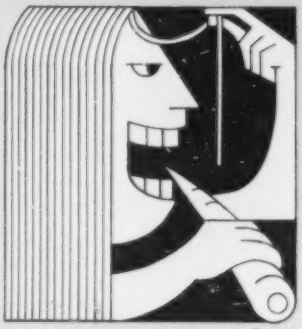
The Truth About TEN Food Folk Tales

For centuries food has been promoted as a remedy for the ills that plague mankind. Some of these folk remedies have some merit. The majority, however, have not withstood the rigors of scientific scrutiny. Here is a look at 10 of the more common food folktales.

1. Starve a fever. Digestion of food, hot or cold, increases the body's heat production, as evidenced by a warm feeling for an hour or so after a large meal. It is likely that this phenomenon is the root of the axiom. Since fevers produce a characteristically hot, uncomfortable feeling, why increase the body's temperature with food? In reality, a fever increases caloric needs—as much as 50 percent; yet, during an acute fever, appetite is poor. Luckily, the duration of a fever is usually short enough so nutritional needs are not seriously compromised.

2. Feed a cold with chicken soup. Eating chicken soup to treat the common cold may have merit because hot soup tends to clear stuffed-up nasal passages and enhance the flow of nasal mucus (the nose becomes more runny). Increased mucus helps shed some of the cold-causing viruses. In fact, warm or hot fluids in general seem to help cold sufferers.

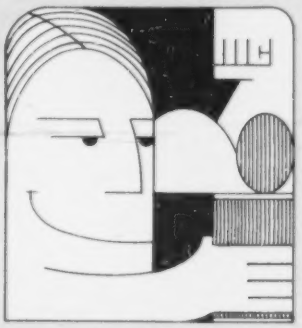
3. Carrots produce curly hair and good vision. Curly hair is a matter of genetics, not diet. But the connection between carrots and eyesight is certainly legitimate. Carrots are a good source of carotene, a compound responsible for the deep yellow/orange color of carrots and sweet potatoes. Carotene is converted to vitamin A during digestion, and vitamin A is an essential component of the visual pigment that maintains normal vision in dim light. Night blindness—difficulty seeing in dim light—is the earliest sign of vitamin A deficiency. Although vitamin A deficiency is rare in the United States, it is responsible for up to 100,000 cases of blindness, primarily in children, in developing countries.



4. Red beets and red wine strengthen the blood. Neither red wine nor beets are particularly beneficial to the blood. This misconception is probably a result of an erroneous association. Since blood is red, people reason, like-colored foods must be enhancing. Another similar wives' tale is that sour foods cause an acid stomach. The fact is the stomach's own digestive juice is more acidic than food, and the foods that stimulate stomach acid secretion tend to be proteins.

5. Iron pots enhance iron content. This common belief is true. The use of iron cookware actually inflates the iron content of foods, especially those with a high acid content, such as tomato sauce. One folk remedy for iron deficiency was to implant iron nails into an apple. This, in fact, is an effective procedure, provided the nails are removed prior to consumption. Implanted nails increase the apple's iron content by 100 percent.

6. Spinach builds muscles and strength. Contrary to the Popeye cartoon theme song, spinach will not build muscles or improve strength. Muscles need exercise to develop. Yet, spinach consumption will increase well-being since it is a good source of folic acid, a B vitamin that is



used in the treatment of certain anemias. This leafy green also has an ample supply of vitamins A and C.

7. Fish is brain food. This is a nebulous claim. Although fish is an excellent source of high quality protein, which is essential for

Max Karl Winkler

brain development, this process is about 90 percent complete by the fourth year of life. More appropriately, fish should be dubbed heart food. It seems that fish fat helps reduce the risk of heart disease.

8. Chew each bite of food 32 times. This directive is designed to reduce overeating, a technique that may or may not work, depending on the practitioner. In the late 19th century a British statesman reasoned that humans had 32 teeth, therefore each bite of food should be chewed 32 times. A 40-year-old, wealthy, retired American businessman Horace Fletcher popularized the theory in the United States. Fletcher, who was so physically unfit that he was refused life insurance, subscribed to the theory because it helped him slow down consumption and shed excess pounds. The practice became known as Fletcherism, and the nation embraced it. The only contribution Horace Fletcher made to nutrition is that he pointed out that obesity is linked to overeating.

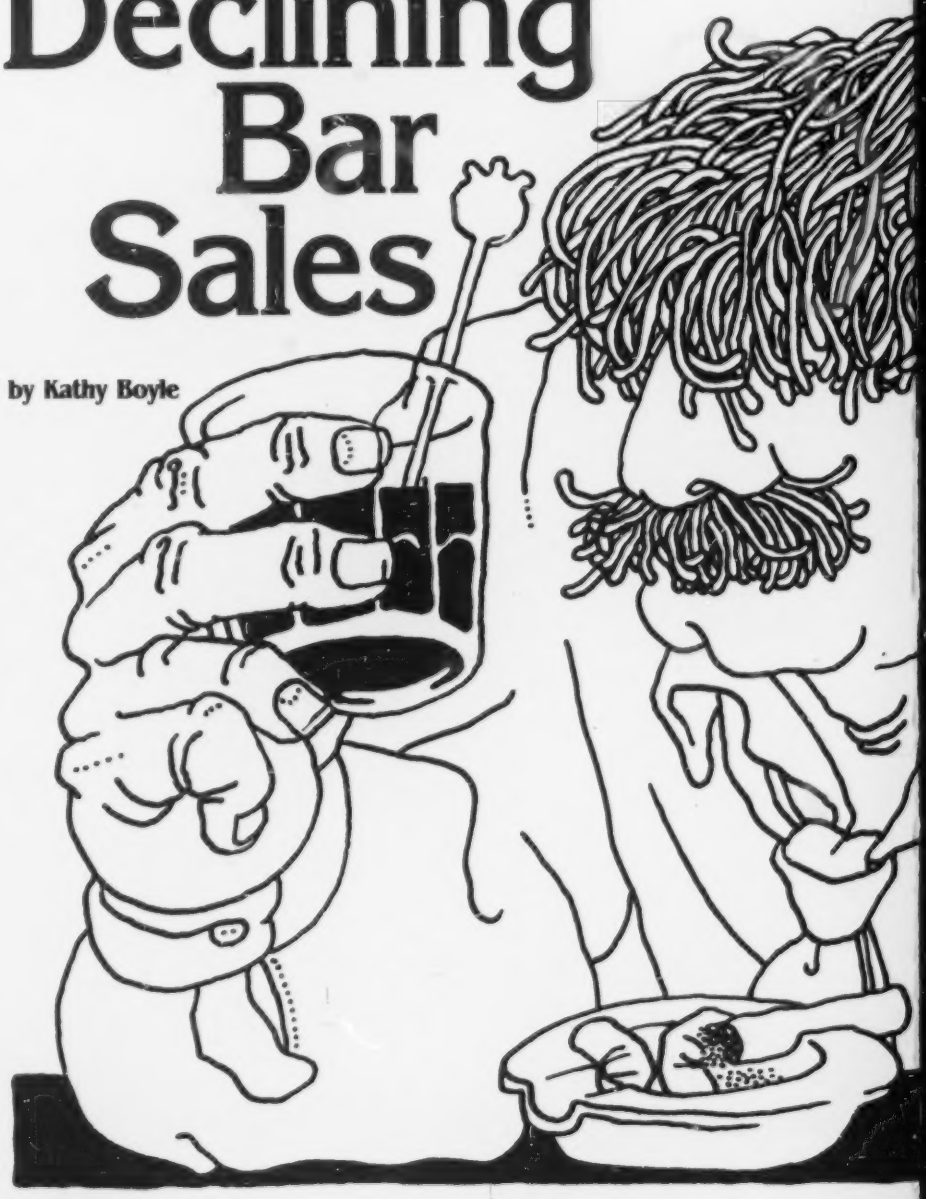
9. An apple a day keeps the doctor away. Before dental medicine developed into a separate discipline, doctors took care of the whole body, including the teeth. Apple eating came the closest to oral hygiene, hence the recommendation to consume one apple per day. Apples are still referred to as nature's toothbrush. They are also a good source of the dietary fiber pectin, which delays stomach emptying and enhances the feeling of satiety.

10. Drink gelatin for strong nails. There is no scientific proof that gelatin strengthens nails. Fingernails, like other body tissues, need protein for growth and maintenance. Although gelatin is protein, it is of poor quality, formed from the breakdown of the connective tissue of muscle in meat, fish and poultry. The protein in milk, eggs, fish and meats is far more beneficial.

—Claire Regan, R.D.

Strategies to Declining Bar Sales

by Kathy Boyle



People are drinking less. Restaurateurs know it and many are aggressively pursuing new business to replace lost bar revenues. The approaches vary from adding food or non-alcoholic beverages to completely revamping and changing the concept of the bar area. The strategies are working. In fact, restaurateurs find they are not only making up lost revenues, but quite often they are also exceeding past profits. In addition to the increased business, a growing number of operators find that their aggressive food and beverage programs have led to lower insurance costs.

Adding food

Adding food to the bar can be as simple as serving a few appetizers or as elaborate as converting the bar into a food center. In many cases, the addition of free, or relatively free, food has served as a drawing card and eventually boosted sales.

The Baja Cantina, a Mexican-theme restaurant in Marina del Rey, CA (125 seats including 75 seats in bar), cleverly located its special tortilla grill and an official 'tortilla lady' near the front door. "Customers are tempted by the selection when they enter," says Geri B. Phinny, daytime manager and mother of Pat Phinny, owner of the two Baja Cantinas. "When they see fresh tortilla and quesadilla appetizers being made to order, with duck, lamb and chicken, they decide to sit and relax and have a drink with an appetizer." Drink prices are not reduced. The grill also features skewered shrimp and other appetizers and doubles as a draw for Sunday brunch.

Another innovative approach is the "Hungry Hour," initiated six months ago at the J. W. Marriott Hotel in Washington, DC, in response to concern about drunk driving. The Hungry Hour is an all-you-can-eat, early evening buffet for one dollar. Proceeds from the one-dollar cover charge are given to various charities. According to June Farrell, director of media relations for Marriott Hotels and Resorts, despite the paltry cover charge, Marriott does not skimp. "We are serving really super-duper hors d'oeuvres very creatively presented. It is a revolving menu, but items may include a pasta bar, with a choice of various sauces and toppings, or a selection of high-quality deli meats, chicken or shrimp." Drinks remain full-price during the Hungry Hour. Due to the initial success in Washington, and the excellent publicity generated, Marriott has now gone nationwide with the concept.

Kathy Boyle is a free-lance writer in the Washington, DC, area who writes frequently for **Restaurants USA.** *Her most recent articles were on hydroponics and purchasing.*

Fight

Max Karl Winkler

Tom Foolery's, a 175-seat Victorian eatery and drinkery in Westborough, MA, with an 80-seat lounge, also serves a special selection of appetizers each evening. "Last year when Massachusetts prohibited discounting drink prices and banned happy hours, I was unaffected because I never discounted drinks," says E. Thomas McCabe, president. "What we would have given to the customer in reduced drink prices, we have given in food instead. I have always believed that 'happy hour'—between five and seven—is a special time of the day when people want to relax, unwind and meet with friends from work. They do not go out because drinks are cheaper."

That is why for the past three and a half years, McCabe has served an assortment of hors d'oeuvres during the early evening hours based on a different theme each night. Monday is "Taco Night;" Tuesday is "Italian Night;" Wednesday is "Swedish Night" with Swedish meatballs, cheeses, and fruits; and Thursday is "Whiskey Dog Night," featuring miniature cocktail hot dogs in a spicy hot whiskey sauce. In addition to the featured theme, "there is a constant flow of food out of the kitchen every evening," says McCabe. Trays go by with such hors d'oeuvres as pita bread pizza, tuna melts and bite-size quiches.

According to McCabe, serving free appetizers doesn't have to be that costly. "We are pretty well known for our own potato skins, and the by-product of potato skins, of course, is a lot of potato. We use the leftover potato for our own potato-cheese ball appetizers. All we do is mix the potato with cheese and some other ingredients, roll them into balls and deep fry them. They are very cheap to make, and they are a really popular item."

Along with the free daily appetizer specials, McCabe offers a reasonably priced hors d'oeuvre menu—high in protein and carbohydrates—because these foods are known to slow the absorption rate of alcohol.

Unlike Tom Foolery's, however, many operators have long depended on reduced drink price happy hours, which are rapidly being legislated out of existence. One restaurateur who has adapted well to the new focus on health and alcohol awareness is Donald J. Berchtold, owner of John's Meatmarket in Portland, OR (200 seats with 50 of the seats in the bar).

When Berchtold saw his bar business drop, he created an extensive, reasonably priced hors d'oeuvre menu, as well as a nightly selection of free hors d'oeuvres, and, more recently, a special line of lower alcohol drinks. "Our appetizer menu is reasonably priced, and to bring attention to it we printed it inside our cocktail napkins, which are always opened in front of customers when they sit down." The menu includes such selections as Chinese chicken salad, nachos, artichokes, and fish and chips. Free appetizers can include mini-tacos, mini-hamburgers, wontons and fried zucchini. They are a by-product of Berchtold's catering business. Each day Berchtold makes extra of whatever he will serve at catering jobs and serves them in his restaurant.

Revamping the bar

Some operators have decided that adding food to the existing bar was not

enough. They have revamped the space. One operator who has accomplished this changeover successfully is Bill Main, co-owner of the Shorebird Restaurant in Princeton-by-the-Sea, CA (225 seats). Main says he realized three years ago that bars were not "in" anymore. So he converted his bar into an all-day cafe by changing the lighting, the background music and the decor to create a busier, more multipurpose environment. He also changed the menu. "When I began planning, I thought, 'Why just add appetizers?' Instead, I wanted to try a full cafe menu," explains Main.

What is a cafe menu? According to Main, in some ways the cafe is like a 24-hour coffee shop, with its informal atmosphere, but the menu is standard American seafood fare. "We have clam chowder; deep fried calamari; oysters on the halfshell; seafood salads, both shrimp and crab; crab and shrimp cocktail; crab-stuffed mushrooms; fried zucchini; fried onion rings; cheese garlic bread; tuna sandwiches; and one or two other simple sandwiches, including a real good hamburger for the non-seafood customer," he says.

The changeover has worked. "We are selling more food, and in dollars we are selling more liquor than we were before, with an overall 10 percent net increase in sales in the restaurant. As a ratio, however, liquor is down now in comparison to food sales. Our cafe attracted more people, and people attract people. We had underestimated the off-peak potential of getting customers. Some of this potential is a result of the work situation. The traditional nine-to-five job is changing with flex time, job sharing, two jobs in the workplace and, more consulting and freelancing. These changes plus more tourist travel mean there are a lot more people out there looking for something at three in the afternoon. Overall," Main concludes, "we developed another identity for the restaurant and appealed to a whole new market of individuals who had never thought of us before. It has been a great challenge, and we created an opportunity out of it."

Emphasizing low-alcohol or no-alcohol drinks

Complementing many aggressive food programs are equally ambitious low-alcohol and no-alcohol beverage programs. (See sidebar for definitions.) "We see certain low-alcohol wines and beers as a coming trend, and even though they may be a small portion of our business now, we want to gain experience in merchandising these new products," says Main.

"We serve our bottled waters like we serve our martinis—each in its own silver, mini ice bucket with crushed ice around the open bottle and a flower, usually a carnation, garnishing the ice."

M.T. Pier, co-owner of The Wine Cellar, a fine dining restaurant in Fort Collins, CO (132 seats plus 70 seats in lounge), agrees. "We want our customers to know we are enthused about their non-alcoholic choice of drink. For example, we have been carrying a non-alcoholic champagne for almost two years. Besides being a selling point for younger people, like those going to a prom or formal, the champagne is also attractive to our non-drinking customer. It still caters to the customer's sophistication. And by serving this customer graciously, we often make the group he or she is with feel comfortable."

Operators maintain, however, that they have not seen an overwhelming increase in sales of non-alcoholic or low-alcohol beers. Operators that do carry a selection generally only offer one or two selections.

Berchtold of John's Meatmarket sees an opportunity in low-alcohol mixed drinks. "Because people are more aware of their drinking habits, we saw an opportunity to serve lighter drinks. Now we offer either a slush, a juice or some other concoction each night with only half an ounce of liquor in it. This way the customer, who still wants a drink, can have two drinks before cutting himself or herself off," says Berchtold. An unforeseen bonus, adds Berchtold, is the positive effect on bartenders' morale. According to Berchtold, the creative low-alcohol drinks have become fun for the bartenders, too, who compete nightly for the best recipe. Each night a different liquor is featured: there is vodka night, tequila night, gin night and rum night. "And, I offer the lower alcohol drinks at a lower price, $1.25 each versus the $2.25 to $2.50 for a regular drink."

Dressing up specialty waters, juices

Mineral waters are catching on with patrons seeking an alternative to alcoholic beverages. One operator who has taken full advantage of the trend is David Migicovsky, owner of Coco's Sidewalk Cafe in the fashionable Bal Harbour Shops in Bal Harbour, FL (75 seats indoors, 75 seats outdoors). Nine months ago, Migicovsky added a line of five waters to the menu using what Migicovsky terms a "designer label" approach. Like fine wines in other restaurants, the mineral waters are vigorously marketed on their own menu with a description next to the name of each mineral water, explaining the type of water and its origin.

In keeping with the upscale marketing, the presentation of these waters is dramatic. Drawing on his background in the fashion industry, Migicovsky was determined to make a glamorous statement each time Coco's served a bottled water. "I see food as fashion," says Mi-

gicovsky. "I believe we eat with our eyes. So we serve our bottled waters like we serve our martinis," says Migicovsky, "each in its own silver, mini ice bucket with crushed ice around the open bottle and a flower, usually a carnation, garnishing the ice. We also bring a chilled wine glass." Migicovsky charges $1.95 to $2.25 for each bottled water. He is enjoying excellent sales.

In fact, sales are so good, that he has added bottled Belgian health spa juices. They come in apple, cherry, apricot nectar, pear and pineapple flavors and are served similarly to the waters. In addition, Migicovsky features fresh Florida fruit juices: "We serve our Florida grapefruit and orange juices in elongated, tulip-shaped champagne glasses, which are always garnished with either a fresh slice of fruit or a parasol as an accent," he says.

Adding appealing after-dinner beverages

Operators are rebuilding or bolstering their image and business with coffees,

Do you know the difference between non-alcoholic and alcohol-free?

The thirst for alcohol alternatives has sparked a surge of beverage products. With the variety of products has come a host of confusing and, occasionally, misleading terms. To clear up any questions you or your customers may have, here are some definitions for some of the most common terms.

Beer alternatives

□ **Non-alcoholic.** These beverages are required by law to contain no more than 0.5 percent alcohol by volume. Although there are about 30 brands on the market, the segment accounts for less than one percent of all beer sales. Even so, the category has shown increased growth in the last few years and, because of consumer demand, should continue to pick up steam.

□ **Alcohol-free.** Although the terms "non-alcoholic" and "alcohol-free" appear to be similar, alcohol-free malt beverages must contain absolutely *no* alcohol. Alcohol-free malt beverages are not fermented (which prevents alcohol production), while most non-alcoholic beverages go through the fermentation process and then the alcohol is extracted.

□ **Low-alcohol.** These beverages generally contain about 2.5 percent alcohol by volume—about half the amount in regular beers. Although there are about 20 brands available, this segment accounts for a smaller proportion of total beer sales than the non-alcoholic beer category.

□ **Lite or light.** Light beers have established a definite niche in the beer market. With more than 50 brands now available, they account for nearly 22 percent of total beer sales.

Light beers contain little or no sugars, which lowers their caloric content. In general, they average around 100 calories per serving, compared with 150 calories in most beers. Their alcoholic content, however, is only slightly less than regular beers—between three and four percent versus the average five percent found in most beers.

The term "light" was originally used to identify a lighter-colored brew, but it has evolved into a term connoting low-calorie or low-alcohol. That is why the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (BATF) has ruled that all light or lite beers must specify an average analysis of calories, carbohydrates, fats and proteins on their labels.

Wine alternatives

□ **Wine coolers.** One of the most popular wine-based alternatives, this segment is growing rapidly and now accounts for approximately one-fifth of total wine sales.

Because wine coolers are made with half wine and half fruit juices and carbonated beverages, they contain less alcohol by volume than most table wines—four to six percent versus 11 to 14 percent. Wine coolers also have fewer calories per ounce than do table wines—18 calories per ounce compared with 22 calories. This does not necessarily mean that wine coolers are low-calorie beverages, however. Because most coolers are offered in 12-ounce servings, they actually contain almost twice as many calories *per serving* as an average six-ounce glass of wine.

□ **Low-alcohol.** These beverages are table wines which have had some alcohol extracted from them. Generally, they average between seven and 10 percent alcohol by volume and contain about 45 to 50 calories per six-ounce serving. These beverages have not been too successful, partially because wine coolers have a similar alcohol content and have swallowed much of the available market. Little growth is forecast for this segment.

□ **Non-alcoholic.** Like their similarly-named beer counterparts, non-alcoholic wines must have only 0.5 percent (or less) alcohol by volume. Because new dealcoholizing techniques have added more flavor to these beverages, industry experts expect the segment to experience significant growth.

□ **Light.** As of now, the term "light" on wine labels can be somewhat misleading. Unlike light beers, light wines do not necessarily have lower caloric counts or alcoholic ratios. Legally the phrase "light wine" is actually synonymous with the term "table wine." Consequently, light wines do not have alcohol content parameters and generally average between seven and 14 percent alcohol by volume.

Due to confusion regarding the term, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms has proposed regulating wines labeled "light." Under such a ruling, all light wine labels would have to include an average analysis of contents (similar to those found on light beers), including total carbohydrates, calories, fats and proteins.

□ **Varietal grape juices.** These beverages can also cause confusion because of the way they are marketed. Since varietal grape juices are made with the vinifera grapes usually used in wines, they are sometimes marketed as non-alcoholic wines. This is a misnomer because the grapes in varietal grape juices have not been fermented, which means the beverages are not wines at all. To avoid customer misunderstanding or misordering, group these beverages separately on your menu.

ciders and dessert drinks. Migicovsky, for example, added a selection of calorie counters on his dessert menu, including a 25-calorie "Strawberry Coffee Freeze," made with fresh strawberries and Sanka. It sells for $3.25. He also markets a large line of espressos and grinds fresh coffee every 20 to 25 minutes to release the smell of fresh coffee into the restaurant. Berchtold of John's Meatmarket also has been very successful serving non-alcoholic coffees in his dining room. He uses flavorings to imitate liquors.

The 90-seat Lark Creek Inn in Larkspur, CA, set in a Victorian mansion, recently added several "Warm Ups"—non-alcoholic ciders and coffees—to the bar menu. "Although the drinks are not a big profit center for the restaurant, they fit in with the health consciousness of the Marin County area and the Lark Creek Inn's sensitivity to the community," explains Millie Howie, the inn's public relations consultant. Since the restaurant is located in apple-growing country, the Larkspur added two hot cider drinks—a "Hot Tempter," which features hot cider, orange zest, clove, nutmeg, a cinnamon stick and is available with or without brandy or rum, and the "Hot Spicer," which features hot cider, a float of fresh cream and freshly grated nutmeg. The hot coffees use instant dissolving cocoa and cinnamon and a float of cream or whipped cream with vanilla and sugar.

Adding ice cream drinks, often known as smoothies, has worked well for other operators. Drawing from its experience running hotels in the Middle East, where there is a large, non-drinking Moslem population, Marriott Hotels in this country quickly adapted some of its Middle Eastern beverages to meet the needs of an increasingly more alcohol aware public. These include smoothies (yogurt-based drinks), fruities (fruit juices with no cream bases) and fizzes (fruities combined with carbonated beverages).

Ice cream drinks may not suit every establishment, however. Berchtold of John's Meatmarket in Portland, OR, tested an ice cream machine in his operation but decided against it. "It never went real well," he says. "I think we have more mature customers, and they are not coming in for an ice cream drink."

Adding fun

Adding entertainment to draw in new business continues to be another strategy for boosting business. The Sweetwater Cafe, located in Cleveland, Ohio's playhouse district, draws on the talents of its aspiring waiters and waitresses, who can perform everything from Broadway numbers to country music. "The impromptu performances have the effect of increasing business in general," says Gary Lucarelli, owner. "Employees like it, too, because they get exposure to critics and producers dining in the cafe," he adds.

Tempting non-alcoholic beverages

□ **Italian soda**

Fill a tall glass with ice and pour in the customer's favorite Italian soda to within about one inch of the rim. Float whipped cream on top. Garnish with appropriate fruit to complement flavor of soda.

□ **Baltimore Park punch**

Mix equal parts of orange, grapefruit and pineapple juice with a dash of grenadine and orgeat syrup. Blend well and pour over ice in a tall glass. Garnish with a cherry and a pineapple spear.

□ **Fresh fruit freezer**

To your selected fresh fruit, add equal parts of crushed ice and sweet-and-sour mix and a dash of grenadine. Whir in blender. Garnish with fruit of choice.

There should be just enough liquid to cover ice in blender so that the mix stays in frozen state and does not become liquid.

□ **Coconut pineapple freeze**

Place equal parts of cream, sweet-and-sour mix, pineapple juice and coconut cream into blender. Whir until consistency of a pina colada.

□ **Winter warm-up**

To one gallon jug of cider, add 12 to 15 whole cloves, ½ stick cinnamon, one tspn. powdered ginger, one tspn. powdered nutmeg and orange twists (equal to skin of ½ to one orange). Simmer together one hour. Pour into mugs and top with twist of orange.

—The Lark Creek Inn

The Wine Cellar, on the other hand, decided to focus on weekend lounge business by adding live jazz on Friday and Saturday evenings. "We are the only live jazz house in the area, and we've had an excellent response to our efforts to revitalize jazz," maintains M.T. Pier. In addition, Pier believes jazz fits the more culturally upscale image The Wine Cellar is now establishing for itself.

How important entertainment can be in a restaurant is underscored by the success of McFadden Ventures. McFadden Ventures, with 45 units in 18 states and Japan, is the largest entertainment club in America. Although 88 percent of its business comes from liquor sales, McFadden has managed to survive and even prosper in an environment where liquor sales are declining. "We are selling entertainment," says Abbott S. Estrin, vice president for McFadden Ventures, "and liquor is a by-product of that entertainment. We have an environment that does not cater to drunks. Our check average of $7.00 per person represents, at the most, two drinks. We are selling entertainment, ambiance, fun and a place to meet and talk to contemporaries."

To keep pace, McFadden Ventures tries to keep its club environments fresh, inviting and up-to-date. "When backgammon was the rage, we had backgammon clubs. Then it was the urban cowboy, and today we have seven different club concepts—everything from an ocean club to a Colorado vacation home atmosphere. If one atmosphere is not working, within three weeks we convert it to another concept," explains Estrin.

In sum

Despite the fact that liquor sales are down, many operators have been able to devise unique plans for replacing the lost revenue. "Alcohol awareness has been a dark cloud with a real silver lining for us," says Main of the Shorebird. "We changed the identity of our bar and, as a side effect, gained new customers and increased sales. At the same time, we have been able to sell our insurance company on our aggressive food program by telling them the things we are doing to dilute our liquor problem: more food, higher percentage of food to alcohol and the changeover from a bar to a cafe." ❑

COMMISSARIES
Large Opportunities For Small Operators

Commissary kitchens, once associated primarily with vast, multiunit operations, fleets of trucks and massive quantities of precooked foods, are undergoing a change in image. Smaller operations, some with as few as two units, are developing central kitchen systems, personalizing the basic concept to fit their individual needs while taking advantage of the commissary system's economic and competitive benefits.

On September 19, new legislation went into effect which exempted restaurant central kitchens from federal inspection (see "Washington Report" for specifics). Consequently, central kitchens should become even more economically feasible for small operators. In addition to this encouraging legislation, there are many other reasons small operators may want to consider commissary kitchens.

by Cecelia Niepold

Quality control

Tony Packo, owner of the two-unit Tony Packo's Cafe (300 and 120 seats; Toledo, OH), installed a commissary kitchen three years ago when he opened his second Hungarian-style restaurant. The impetus behind the decision was controlling the quality of food at two different locations. "Different chefs with different pots create different flavors," he explains. "We wanted to reduce the chance of that happening."

Although concerned at first that two units might be too few to justify a commissary, Packo is now a firm believer in the merits of a central kitchen. "We were afraid that if we produced food in large quantities—if we didn't have someone stirring each pot—the food wouldn't taste as good," he says. "We were pleasantly surprised," he laughs. "The food actually tastes better. Plus, we have a great deal of control over the quality of food served at both restaurants."

Reduced operating costs

Like Tony Packo, many operators begin to consider commissary kitchens when contemplating expansion. Although it is crucial to carefully evaluate the benefits versus the overhead costs of a commissary before rushing out to buy additional space (see accompanying article), substantial benefits *can* be gained—even with only a few satellite units.

■ **Food costs.** Even small operators can achieve valuable economies of scale when using a commissary kitchen system. Buying larger quantities, even if purchases seem small in comparison with larger firms, can still mean valuable cost savings.

"Our food costs went from 40 percent to 30 percent," maintains Tony Packo. "It wasn't a little drop—it was a head-turning drop." Packo has been able to put the resulting savings into higher quality products.

Buying in bulk also gives small operators more leverage with suppliers. "In separate kitchens you can get robbed blind," laments Ronald Kawitzky, co-owner of Checkers, a four-unit, 50-seat chicken and barbecue operation in New York, NY. "We definitely get better prices now that we are buying larger quantities."

Central kitchens can also help small operators control food costs by increasing efficiency. "It is a much more economical way to allocate scarce resources," maintains Kawitzky. "We can ship food to where it is needed. We don't underload or overload stores, so we cut down on waste."

Cecelia Niepold is managing editor of **Restaurants USA.**

■ **Labor costs.** Labor costs, particularly for a small firm considering expansion, can be tremendously draining. A central kitchen can cut down those costs by concentrating skilled, higher salary employees in one location.

At The American Cafe, a Washington, DC-based company with seven eateries and four take out markets, 70 percent of all food preparation occurs at the central kitchen. "Anything that involves expertise with ingredients or recipe development is done in the central kitchen," says Matthew Spielman, general manager, foodservices. "We have one person who works the grill at each restaurant, and the rest basically assemble the plates and add the garnishes," he explains. "By putting most of our skilled employees in one place, we don't double our labor costs."

Because American Cafe expects to expand in the future, its 10,000-square-foot commissary was built to accommodate at least four more restaurants. The company's philosophy is that as the chain grows, the central kitchen will continue to help control overall operating costs.

■ **Building/equipment costs.** For many small operators, the cost of expansion may seem to outweigh the benefits of additional units. For instance, when Ron Kawitzky of Checkers decided to add more units, he was dismayed by the prices in the high-rent Manhattan market. He found that a commissary kitchen was actually the most affordable way to expand.

"Space is at such a premium in our area; it didn't really pay to have kitchens in all the stores," he explains. Consequently, the company developed a 3,500-square-foot commissary in nearby Brooklyn which delivers freshly prepared food daily to the restaurants. "It was quite an extravagance at the beginning," admits Kawitzky, "but it has proved to be invaluable." Because the restaurants' prep areas are small, the units have more seating space—generating more dollars per square foot.

Central kitchens can help hold down equipment costs as well. "Obviously, it becomes more expensive to multiply new equipment by five," says Kawitzky. Buying new equipment for only one main kitchen has enabled Kawitzky to buy a variety of appliances and, at the same time, expand his product line. "We can now offer many more items, such as homemade salads, calorie-counted items and marinated chicken wings, because we aren't restricted by limited kitchen spaces and equipment in the restaurants."

Expansion opportunities

As Ronald Kawitzky found, a commissary kitchen often opens new avenues of expansion—particularly important for small operations concerned with boosting their bottom line.

Catering is a prime means of generating new revenue. John Miller, co-owner of Bill Miller Barbecue Enterprises in San Antonio, TX (average 125 seats), believes catering and central kitchens are natural partners. "We do a big catering business; it complements our operation perfectly," says Miller, whose firm has grown from three units supported by a small central kitchen to 37 units operating from a 70,000-square-foot commissary.

Producing specialty items for retail or wholesale markets is also more feasible with a central kitchen. Tony Packo's, for instance, now bottles six different items for grocery and retail stores, ranging from hot peppers to a signature hot dog sauce.

Ronald Kawitzky also plans to market Checkers' salads and sauces. "My goal is to turn the commissary into a profit center and make it completely self-sufficient," he avows. And it is possible. With careful planning, creating a profitable central kitchen operation is feasible for even the smallest operators.

Watch your image

Although there are many positive points about commissaries, there are also some potential negatives. One which pertains primarily to small operators is "image."

Even though central kitchens are becoming more common in small operations, they are still associated with huge, impersonal, multi unit chains. Consequently, some small operators with commissaries have taken steps to ensure their operations maintain a personalized image.

"We were concerned that people might drive by and say, 'How can you cook good barbecue without any smoke coming out of the chimney?'" admits John Miller. "But, to ensure that people didn't associate our food with mass production, we made sure our stores weren't plastic-looking by adding plenty of brick and wood accents."

Checkers, too, has been developed to not look like a commissary. Each restaurant has its own theme and decorative touches, such as imported Italian tile and artwork by local artists. Every eatery also has an open grill where customers can watch some of the barbecued items being prepared.

Dee Ruma, owner of Dee Ruma's Deli, a 60-seat, seven-unit operation in St. Louis, MO, which features pasta, salad and pizza, has taken a somewhat different approach. Each of her commercials focuses in on one employee with copy such as, "Your bread is baked fresh by John." "People love it," says Ruma. "It shows that even though we have a commissary, it is still a personalized family-run operation." ❑

When do commissaries make sense?

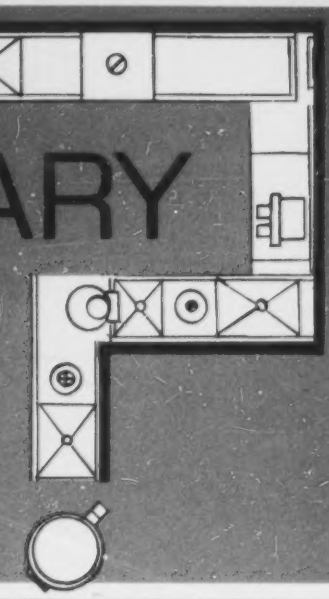
Certain conditions are necessary for a centralized commissary to operate efficiently. Research has demonstrated that in order to establish a successful commissary, an operator generally needs a minimum of four geographically clustered satellites—the larger the number, the more cost-efficient the operation.

Desirable, but not mandatory, are

- ☐ plans for a rapid rollout of new units
- ☐ need or desire for large menu variety with minimum inventory
- ☐ desire for absolute quality and consistency
- ☐ ability to utilize commissary at full capacity, either for primary business alone or through supplemental contracting
- ☐ pursuit of low-cost production methods through the reduction of waste and pilferage and
- ☐ desire for cost-effective access to technologically advanced production methods.

—The New Directions Group, Inc.

Is a COMMISSARY Right for Your Operation



by J.M. (Woody) Woodburn

Commissaries are centralized food preparation facilities that provide increased production control and efficiency in the areas of purchasing, inventory control, production and quality control. One of the underlying beauties of the commissary system is that high-rent space is dedicated primarily to high-profit seats and low-return kitchen space is located in a low-rent warehouse.

However, there is a lot more to planning a commissary system than may appear initially. Commissaries are clearly not for everyone.

To succeed with a commissary, a restaurant must have

- the right market niche
- expansion potential in the area of products, service and markets
- a solid monetary standing and favorable projections
- the need for standardization in the areas of production, staffing and controls and
- a suitable menu, which makes centralized production feasible.

Is a commissary feasible?

Once you have determined whether a commissary has potential for your operation, it is time to question if it is feasible by reviewing labor requirements, purchasing, production, transportation, facilities and equipment.

Can your highly trained kitchen workers be kept busy?

Most anyone in the industry can identify labor as the least controllable, most expensive factor in operations. The turnover rate for restaurants is typically 40 to 80 percent per year and, in fast food, it can be 400 percent. By centralizing operations for multiple units, you can significantly reduce skilled labor requirements. In a commissary, highly trained kitchen workers can practice their craft eight hours a day without the peaks and slow times. Time is not wasted switching from one task to another, and workers can become more efficient when practicing only one or two specialized tasks. In the satellites, a full kitchen is not required and less specialized employees can adequately accomplish the limited amounts of cooking and preparation.

As the commissary grows, however, the technology becomes more complex and will necessitate more highly skilled specialists in the areas of management, production and quality control. You may require outside help from a foodservice consultant or food technologist until the operations warrant a staff position with such expertise.

Do you purchase enough items to warrant centralization?

How much time does staff in each outlet currently spend in purchasing, processing paperwork and receiving? Purchasing costs can be high, sometimes in excess of $15 per order.

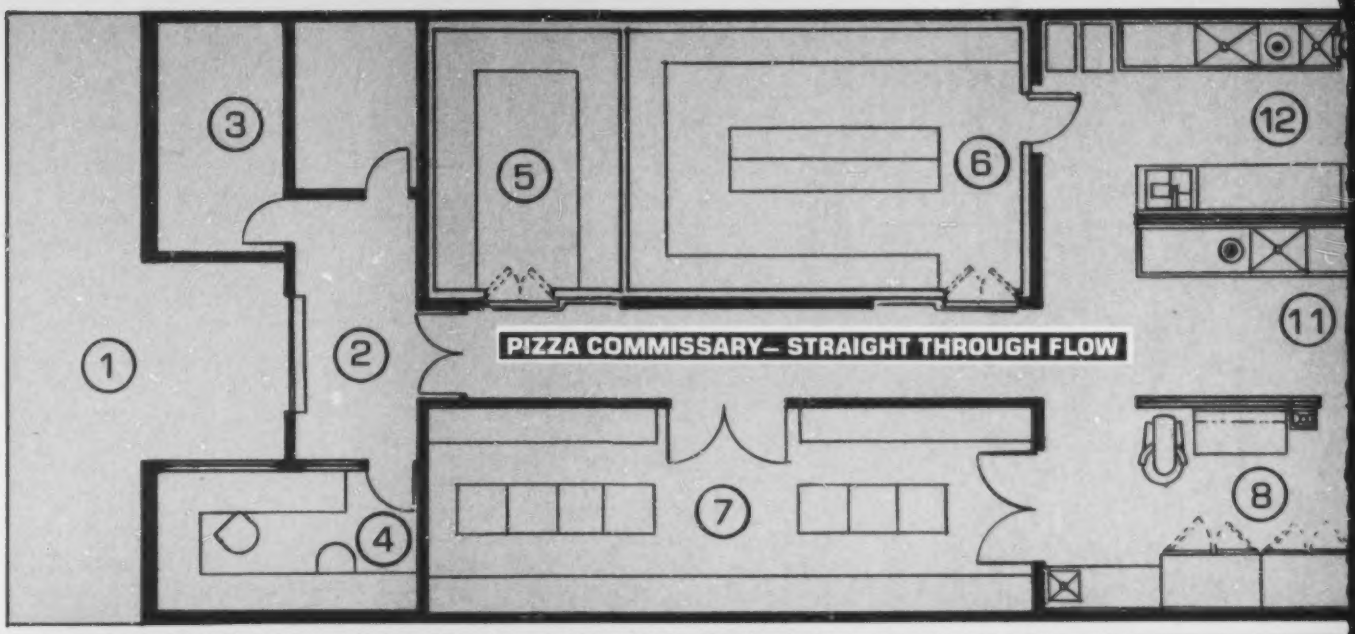
With a commissary you can cut down on these costs by quantity buying, opportunistic purchases, seasonal price reductions and transportation cost reductions with quantity receiving capabilities. Centralization can also reduce overall inventory, assure faster turnover, provide the opportunity for tighter controls and may enable the commissary to use more "raw" product. For example, a commissary can grind its own beef instead of buying it ready-made and save valuable pennies per pound.

Are you prepared to rethink production?

Can your recipes and production techniques be standardized? Do you throw out by-products, which in small quantities are unusable but in large quantities can be utilized? Are you prepared to buy new labor-saving equipment and implement new techniques? If so, a commissary may be for you.

A cook/chill system, for example, is a basic consideration for all but the smallest of operations. Cook/chill is a system of cooking, packaging and quick chilling, which enables products to be held and refrigerated for up to five days with traditional packaging and three weeks by using vacuum packaging. In this way, you could cook your prize chili once a week instead of every day! The trick to the technique is in the chilling process; rapid cooling to slow enzymatic and bacteriological de-

J.M. (Woody) Woodburn is vice president and director of design of MDR Associates, a consulting firm in Fairfax, VA, that specializes in restaurant development, menu development and kitchen design.



terioration of the food allows an increased holding time without product decay. The beauty of this system is that it requires no ingredient or preparation changes and, for the current "fresher is better" marketplace, no preservatives.

The time and effort in the cooking are generally saved at the serving end. Even moderately skilled labor can easily rethermalize (heat) the chilled product, plate it and serve it. The potential here for saving labor, utilities and space is very significant.

You will need to rethink recipes because volume measurements used in small batches (teaspoon, ½ cup, etc.) can be as much as 20 percent off when interpreted into the weight measurements for higher volume recipes. Recipe scaleup into larger quantity production must be thoroughly tested for taste and texture consistency. Also be aware that if a mistake is made in assembling a volume recipe, the cost of that error is magnified by the batch size.

Moreover, other types of production/holding techniques rapidly become complex enough to warrant a food technologist in such areas as substituting starches in sauces for freezing and adding preservatives and/or stabilizers for packaging or canning, etc.

The feasibility of producing any of your menu products in your own commissary should always be compared to the availability of a similar, equal product from a local or regional purveyor. The purveyor's existing capabilities may make an investment on your part economically unsound. Some companies also specialize in purchasing and warehousing and can supply to your specifications.

Are you ready to invest in a transportation system?

The cost of the transportation system is

Planning commissary transportation

Here are some factors to consider when planning a transportation system for a commissary.

□ All packaging should be strong enough to withstand handling and transportation. For example, liquid containers should be splashproof. The use of disposable packaging may be a good solution for container handling and warewashing, but adds its own set of problems in storage and waste disposal.

□ Arrangements should be made for the movement of bulk containers or shipping modules, such as securing handlift cabinets, which are not heavy, dollies, cabinets and pallets with large wheels.

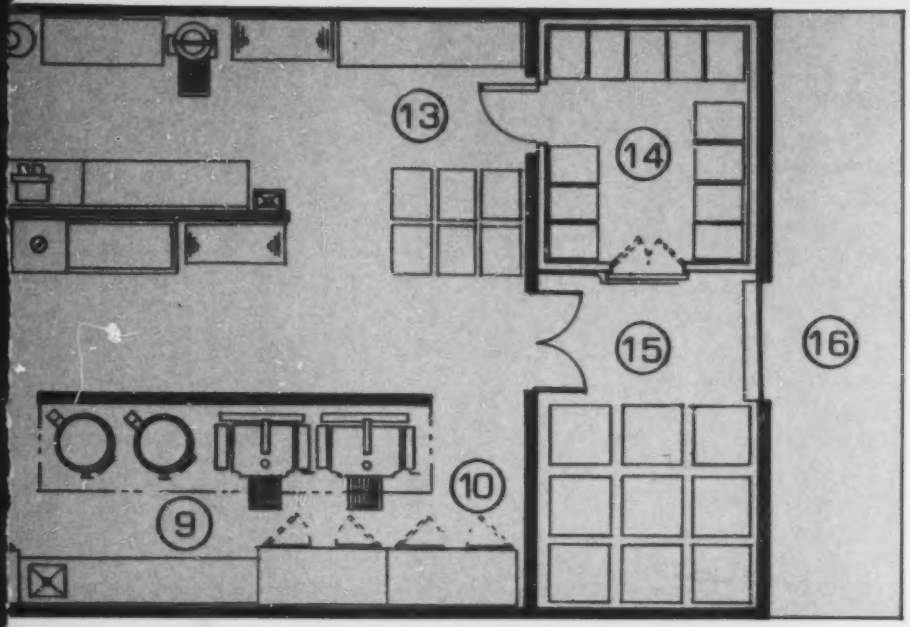
□ Strength and durability of cabinets and racks should be assured with extra bracing on cabinets, transport locks on doors, tie-downs in trucks to secure loads, bumpers and reinforced handles and reinforced doors and heavy hinges.

□ There should be systemwide accessibility at the commissary and at each unit. Items needed for this task include truck docks or hydraulic tailgates on trucks, ramps at all level changes and wide enough doors and passageways.

□ Shipping containers and modules must be staged and stored throughout the system.

□ Where and how cleaning and sanitation take place for all parts of the system should be spelled out. Make sure that all parts are cleanable, including product containers, shipping modules (cabinets, racks, pallets), trucks and shipping docks.

□ Ongoing costs for system maintenance should also be considered.



11. Ware washing
12. Cold-vegetable prep
13. Packaging
14. Shipping cooler
15. Shipping
16. Loading dock

a major factor in assessing commissary feasibility because it is the vital link between the centralized unit and the satellites. If the commissary is not close to its satellites and its suppliers, if the transportation route is subject to frequent rush-hour delays or if the satellites do not have easy entry/exit points, distribution costs can offset the advantages of mass production. Adverse travel conditions can result in a deteriorated product.

Designing commissary kitchen space

When designing the kitchen space in a commissary, keep in mind the need for

- minimized flow patterns
- level floors, especially at walk-ins, for good handling of materials
- rubrails and cornerguards in high-traffic areas to preserve the structure
- trash handling, including cartons, cans, fats, oils, and garbage
- multiple, flexible utility connections to assure ease of equipment substitution or relocation
- adequate station lighting and
- hose stations for entire facility washdown.

When assessing the transportation costs, consider the costs of the delivery vehicles and the holding materials, including the type of packaging or product containers and shipping modules (racks, cabinets, pallets). Don't forget that refrigerated products must be maintained, either by insulated containers and eutectic plates or with mechanical refrigeration in the carts or on the truck. (See sidebar for further details.)

Have you considered additional facilities and equipment?

Not just any site will do for a commissary. It must be close to the market areas (satellites), situated in a "warehouse" location to reduce lease rates, accessible to major highways and railways for product transport and convenient to public transportation to expand the available labor pool.

Generally, the layout of the commissary should follow a very defined and functional flow pattern. The major points of flow are receiving, dry and refrigerated storage, cold and hot processing, chilling, refrigerated and dry staging and product shipment. The most simple layout is a straight line—raw product is received at one end, stored and processed, and finished product is shipped from the other. Unfortunately, most buildings do not have the luxury of loading docks on both ends, and there are advantages to compressing the flow pattern into a "U" shape.

Product test stations—to test the food at various points in the production cycle—and extended holding areas may be required by codes. Checkpoints for quality and quantity are required for good control and should be planned for proper flow and space.

A commissary will undoubtedly require some investment in equipment. The range of equipment for centralized production is as diverse as the types and sizes of operations. On the small end, transplanted restaurant equipment, used much more efficiently, may be adequate. On the large end, it can go up to full "factory" production/automated manufacturing. Labor-saving equipment, too expensive to use in traditional kitchens, can be cost-effective in a commissary.

Utilization is the key to equipment. For instance, a food processor that has the capacity to shred 200 pounds an hour is rarely used for one hour in a restaurant. However, it could produce three-quarters of a ton of product in one day of commissary operation. This represents a great payback compared to six machines in six restaurants sitting idle 80 percent of the time.

All the central kitchen equipment and smallwares should be specified from a systems approach: one pan size (or fractions) for all production cooking and cold food prep and one pan size for baking. In addition, food processes should be consolidated as much as possible, such as vegetable prep, cooking, baking, packaging, etc.

In a commissary, you need high-quality equipment that is reliable. If you are pushing your equipment to near peak capacity, malfunction and downtime can be disastrous to the system. That is why an initial investment in only the best equipment pays off in the long run.

Summary

As this article suggests, planning a commissary system involves quite different considerations from planning a traditional kitchen. But given the right conditions, the advantages of operating a commissary can be numerous—from simplified production to increased quality control. ❑

MENU MERCH

by Claire Regan

Ask your patrons to define the primary purpose of a menu, and you'll get a variety of responses—to educate, to inform, to entertain, to be visually pleasing. But, among restaurant operators, consultants and critics there is little argument: First and foremost, the menu should sell.

Many factors contribute to the selling power of a menu, but one that is frequently overlooked is descriptions of menu items. "It is a grave mistake to merely list the items on a menu," warns John Rosson, restaurant columnist and food writer for *The Washington Times* and two-time judge in NRA's Great Menu Contest. "American diners are intimidated by unfamiliarity. They're not inclined to ask questions or force explanations; they will just not order an unfamiliar menu item."

Customers should know what they are getting

Sam Trapani, who runs Peaches, a 90-seat, contemporary, fullservice restaurant in Rochester, NY, agrees with Rosson that menus should describe food in an honest but attractive manner. Trapani views his menu as a suggestive selling tool and goes to the trouble to include descriptions for everything from garlic bread to eggplant scallopini. "It's important for customers to know what they are getting. They tend to be more satisfied and less prone to send food back to the kitchen. Plus, I like to modify popular, common dishes to make them uniquely Peaches. This requires descriptions," he says. Trapani also believes descriptive copy on the menu motivates his cooks to maintain a certain degree of consistency.

"You can't assume that all your patrons are familiar with a particular dish, even if it's a common one," adds Steve Thom, owner of Steve's Restaurant, an 85-seat operation in Buffalo, WY. Thom maintains that even a simple description of the ingredients increases the likelihood of selling the food. "I tried hokey descriptions, but they just confuse people. Terms like 'luscious' and 'golden brown' are useless and turn people off. I try to emphasize the main ingredients—their quality and freshness." Thom practices what he preaches. The "Brother John's Veal" on Steve's menu is described as "sauteed veal, fresh apple slices, green peppercorns, sweet cream and cognac."

SOUPS

CONCH CHOWDER	2.50
FRONT YARD BOUILLABAISSE	4.95
CHILLED STRAWBERRY SOUP	2.25
HOT OR COLD SOUP OF THE DAY	

HOT APPETIZERS

BRYAN HOMES SEAFOOD PIE – *lobster, crabmeat and shrimp*	4.50
GOLDEN CRABMEAT IMPERIAL – *baked in a flaky crust*	4.25
ALLIGATOR BITES – *marinated and fried*	6.95
ESCARGOT – *fresh basil and pecan pesto*	4.95
CONCH FRITTERS – *Key Lime mustard sauce*	3.95

COLD APPETIZERS

GULF SHRIMP – *basil mayonnaise sauce*	5.95
CONCH AND SCALLOPS SEVICHE – *marinated in lime juice*	3.95
SMOKED NATIVE FISH – *from our own smoke house*	market price
JUMBO SHRIMP COCKTAIL – *traditional cocktail sauce*	7.95
SMOKED LOIN OF PORK – *with deviled eggs*	3.95
BELUGA CAVIAR – *classic Russian accompaniments*	market price

The Historic Bryant Homes Restaurant in Fort Lauderdale, FL, has found that

Brief descriptions are the trend

Such brief descriptions are the trend, according to Jack Miller, restaurant consultant and chairman of the Hospitality and Restaurant Management program at St. Louis Community College in St. Louis, MO. "Years ago when patrons were less familiar with dining out and different food items, they needed lots of written descriptions. But, now that patrons are more educated about food, the descriptions should be informative but brief."

In fact, some operators have painted themselves into a corner by saying too much. Anthony Gillette, owner of The Historic Bryant Homes Restaurant in Ft. Lauderdale, FL, (176 seats), which specializes in Floridian cuisine, used to include comprehensive descriptions

Claire Regan, R.D., is research manager, nutritionist for the National Restaurant Association.

ANDISING

Brief Descriptions

Sizzle The Sell!

FISH ENTRÉES

FILET OF GROUPER
with peach and mango sauce
12.95

SNAPPER IN A BAG
baked with pineapple, avocado and red grapes
13.95

SEAFOOD CURRY
shrimp scallops and crabmeat, served with condiments
14.95

STUFFED SHRIMP IN PUFF PASTRY
filled with crabmeat, shrimp and mushrooms, served with tarragon butter sauce
16.95

FRESH FLORIDA FROG LEGS
brown butter sauce and garlic tomato concassée
18.95

BAKED STUFFED FLORIDA LOBSTER
a light stuffing of herbs and mushrooms baked in its own shell
market price

MEAT ENTRÉES

CHICKEN MATECUMBE
breast of chicken basted with dijon mustard and seasoned crumbs
12.95

FILET MIGNON
medallions garnished with sauteed hearts of palm and daisy potatoes
18.95

VEAL BRYAN HOMES
breaded medallions of veal, with green fettucini
16.95

BLACKENED PEPPER STEAK
rolled in black pepper, garnished with sauteed hearts of palm and green peppercorn sauce
19.95

RACK OF LAMB
fillets marinated and served with a brown butter sauce
17.95

STUFFED VEAL CEDAR KEY
filled with andouille sausage and bleu cheese, served with saffron rice
19.95

ROAST DUCKLING DUVAL
glazed with fresh raspberry sauce
14.95

A fresh salad, an appropriate starch and fresh vegetables will accompany your dinner

Chef de Cuisine, Barry H. Holdridge

a simple, less descriptive menu increases customer satisfaction.

of his offerings, but now his approach is much simpler. "I found that those unfamiliar with our regional dishes would conjure up an image based on the description that didn't always match what they were served. Then they would be disappointed," Gillette recalls. "So I developed a new, less descriptive menu, and the simplicity has seemed to increase satisfaction." His "Snapper in a Bag" is now described as "Snapper in a Bag, baked with pineapple, avocado and red grapes."

Saying too much can also be a problem when describing dishes that include seasonal foods. Robin Salzer, owner of Robin's, a 149-seat family restaurant in Pasadena, CA, is proud of his menu which includes a variety of seasonal foods. But not all ingredients are always available. So to avoid disappointing customers, Salzer has developed descriptive copy that is not definitive. For his "Fruit Fantasy," for example, he says, "First we cone out the pineapple boat, then fill it with chilled fresh fruit. We usually have melons, pineapples, grapes, oranges and strawberries with rainbow sherbet or cottage cheese."

Other operators report success with similar approaches. Salads can be described as "iceberg with other greens," instead of specifically naming spinach or romaine. And if size is important to mention but measurements are not always precise, descriptions such as "about half a pound" may be the answer.

"My first menu had no descriptions, and it didn't sizzle the sell. . . . If I had three different types of operations, I'd use descriptive menus in all of them."

What to say

John Gruner, president of Gruner Solutions, a foodservice consulting firm in Richmond, VA, and instructor of NRA's Menu Development Seminar, believes "operators need to speak more intelligently to their consumers. Words like 'plump and juicy' are not essential. There is no room for being cutesy." What every description needs, he adds, are some basic facts so that the customer can make a purchasing decision. These essentials include

- the real name of the item, for instance, T-bone or club steak,
- the cooking method,
- the main ingredients,
- a description of the sauce—no "secret" or "our own" adjectives are acceptable,
- the quality or government grade if applicable,
- any unusual method of service, such as "wrapped in parchment" and
- any information that contributes to the differentiation of the dish.

In addition to the merchandising advantage of such descriptions, Gruner believes that the information also can provide clues or insights about the nutritional value of the item.

Descriptions of the type of fat help health-conscious consumers as do facts about preparation and cooking methods. "With menu descriptions, my patrons on diets don't have to ask so many questions. They know right away if an item contains milk, butter or garlic," says Steve Thom. "Menu descriptions are also beneficial for those with food allergies, and they may prompt a request to omit an ingredient,

such as salt or oil. That's fine with me. My customers are my lifeblood, and I'll do almost anything to increase their dining pleasure."

Who should write copy

Many operators believe they are the best authors for their menus because they are intimately familiar with their operations. Yet most menu advisors disapprove because they maintain writers usually have more success seeing the menu and operation through the customers' eyes. Not only can they make a menu appear less cluttered by avoiding unnecessary repetitions but they also can help customers understand what they are reading.

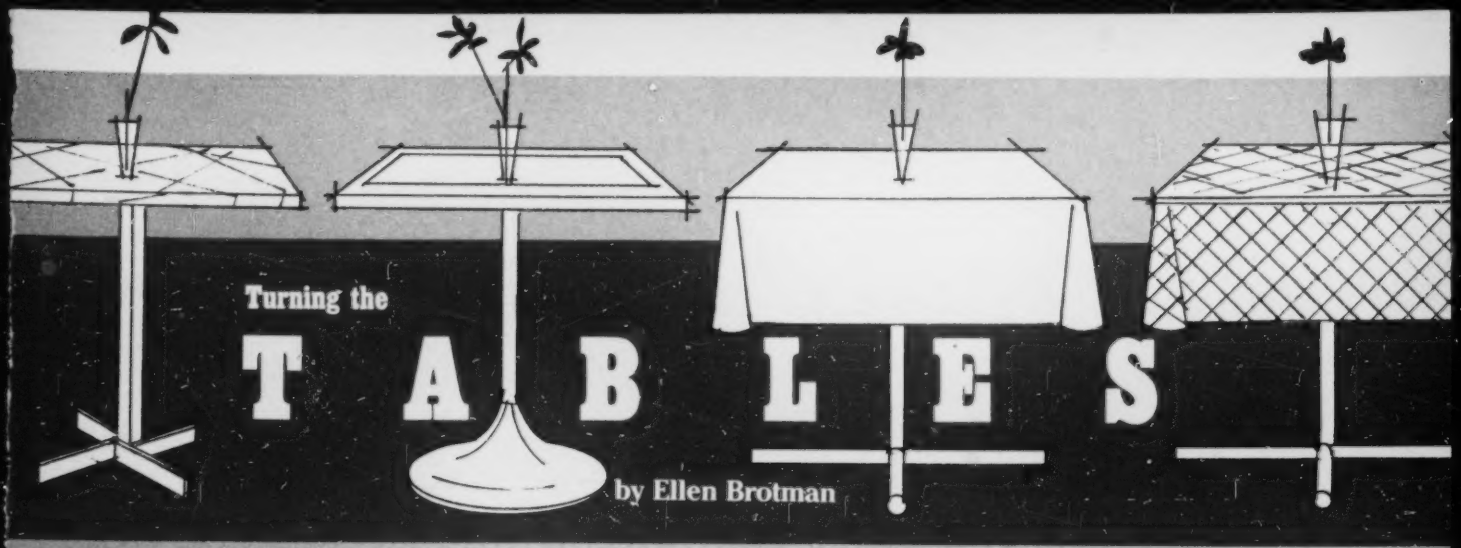
George Sorenson, a free-lance writer in Minneapolis, MN, for example, points out the value of "menu notes." "Many times clarifications are scattered and difficult to find. They may be repeatedly buried in the copy and applicable to at least half the dishes," he says. "It helps to highlight general statements such as: 'All tamales are pork filled' or 'Our traditional flour tortillas are fried in lard, but corn tortillas are strictly vegetarian.' "

Operators believe descriptions sell food

No matter who has written the copy, most operators who describe their menu items would never go back to a menu without descriptions. The reasons why are similar to these impressions by Robin Salzer. "I'd never again go with a straight list of foods," he declares. "My first menu had no descriptions, and it didn't sizzle the sell. This menu (with descriptions) is more personal and sells better. If I had three different types of operations, I'd use descriptive menus in all of them." ❑

Peaches
Welcome to Peaches. When we opened our first restaurant, the Big Apple Cafe on Park Avenue, we really had our hands full. Call it old fashioned, but it has always been our goal to use fresh, natural ingredients. No artificial fillers or microwave ovens for us. Some of the recipes came from the family. Others were invented by patrons and chefs. With Peaches, we hope to explore our culinary expertise and your sense of adventure simultaneously. If we had to name our specialty, we'd say Continental with an accent on the Mediterranean. Like the Apple, Peaches is owner-built and operated. We're here to guide you to a deliciously different drinking and dining experience. For us, it's a matter of pride.
TOTALLY EGGPLANT
All items served with salad
Eggplant Casserole 7.49
Specially prepared by breading and frying and served in casserole on a bed of lavish linguine with red sauce. Broiled Provolone provides the final touch.
Eggplant & Linguine 7.49
This wonderful, beautiful vegetable again, served mixed right in with the linguine and with a generous flavoring of garlic in our popular red sauce.
Eggplant Rolentini 7.95
Breaded fresh eggplant slices are wrapped around ricotta cheese, eggs, and parsley. It's not only beautiful to look at but pleasurable to eat! Served in a casserole with red sauce and a heavy dusting of Parmesan cheese.
Sicilian Casserole 7.95
The best of Little Italy. A casserole of meatballs, eggplant and linguine, topped with red sauce, Parmesan, and Provolone cheeses.
Eggplant Scalopini 7.49
Like all good Scalopini, this one is flavored with Marsala wine. Chunks of eggplant are breaded and lightly fried. Mushrooms and garlic join the party. Linguine on the side with garlic butter and cheese.
FETTUCINE ALFREDO
All items served with salad
This dish is named for a famous restaurant. Besides it sounds better than Fettucine Peaches. The simple and correct preparation is an artful combination of butter, cream, Parmesan and fettucine noodles. At Peaches we serve the original recipe or any combination of the following vegetables, meat and seafood items ... be creative.
Fettucine Alfredo — the original recipe (we've been there) 7.50
Artichoke hearts, mushrooms, green peas, black olives 75¢ Item
Ham 1.00 Scallops 2.00
SIMPLY PASTA
All items served with salad
Pasta Carbonara 8.50
A traditional Northern Italian favorite combining freshly sautéed onions, fresh cut Parmesan cheese served over fettucine noodles.
Spaghetti & Meatballs 4.95
Three important parts make up a perfect presentation. First, the meatballs are from a family recipe. Second, the tomato sauce is often appreciated but never duplicated. Finally, the pasta arrives al dente, never overdone.
Tortellini Primavera 7.95
A delicious combination of our donut shaped veal stuffed pasta and freshly sautéed vegetables in a garlic butter sauce.
Tortellini 6.95
Donut-shaped pasta is stuffed with well seasoned veal and served with either a red or an Alfredo sauce.
White Clam Sauce on a Bed of Linguine 5.95
Freshly made white clam sauce. None better in the city.
Cheese Ravioli with Red Sauce 5.95
Little cheese dumplings with our own red sauce. If you've never had great ravioli, this is it.
WELL-KNOWN FAVORITES
All items served with salad & hot potatoes, except as noted.
Sicilian Steak 10.95
10 oz. New York Strip Steak which has been pounded, dabbed with garlic, coated with Parmesan cheese, bread crumbs and special seasonings, and sautéed in butter. Served with sautéed mushrooms.
10 oz. N.Y. Strip Steak Dinner 9.95
We only use premium beef, broiled the way you tell us to.
Veal Parmesan 8.95
Tender slices of Provimi Veal are lightly breaded and fried then covered with our own red sauce. Served on a bed of linguine covered with melted Provolone cheese.
Surf & Turf 12.95
Surfs up. Broiled fresh scallops and shrimps are served in a cream and mushroom sauce which accompanies a char-broiled New York Strip Steak cooked to your specifications. The best of both.
Shrimp Scampi 9.95
Large prawns are broiled in garlic butter until tender. Our scampi is served with a side of linguine so you can enjoy every bite of sauce.
Broiled Scallops 9.50
Nothing is sweeter than scallops unless it's Peaches. These are pure and simple, broiled in butter, and served en casserole.
Scallops St. Steven 9.50
We don't know how he got to be a saint, but it might have had something to do with the way he cooked. Fresh scallops, marinated in wine, with garlic and tarragon, and then broiled in butter. Served en casserole.
Coquille St. Jacques 9.50
Fresh scallops are broiled and then combined in our own special cream sauce, flavored with sautéed mushrooms and other good things.
Broiled Haddock 7.50
We like it broiled with lots of butter.
Fried Scallops 9.50
Another maritime favorite that we pride ourselves on serving properly. Scallops are sweet and delicious, just like Peaches. These are served with steak fries.
Fried Shrimp 9.95
One of the all-time great favorites of the sea. These are fried to perfection and served with steak fries.
Fish Fry 5.95
A large portion of deep-fried fresh haddock. Served with steak fries and tartar sauce.
Fish of the Day (Friday only)
The catch is always different; ours is always fresh. Another excellent reason to be glad it's Friday again.
Veal French 8.95
The finest Italian-style milkfed veal is lightly battered and sautéed in wine and lemon butter. Served with a side of linguine and red sauce. A very popular presentation.
Chicken Brandy 8.95
This should be called Chicken Christopher after our chef who insists it be on the menu, it's that good! Strips of boneless Perdue chicken breasts sautéed in cream, butter, fresh mushrooms, brandy, and spices. Arrives on a bed of rice.
Chicken Francaise 8.50
Lightly battered and sautéed boneless Perdue chicken breasts are cooked in wine and lemon butter — oh, la la. Served with rice so you won't miss any sauce.

Descriptive copy turns menus into suggestive selling tools at Peaches in Rochester, NY.



Turning the TABLES

by Ellen Brotman

Your tables do not have to disappear into the woodwork. They can add vitality, color, style and visual interest to your restaurant, enhancing your design or making a design statement of their own. When you evaluate a table, you should consider both its top and its base. Since table bases are usually hidden inside a cluster of chairs, however, the "look" of a table is predominantly established by the design and treatment of the top.

Designing with tablecloths

A common design practice is to cover the tabletop with linen. There is no question that the starched white linen tablecloth has traditionally been—and will continue to be—a symbol of a tasteful, classically formal setting.

With the trend toward more upscaled palettes, the use of brightly colored table linens has become a viable option for most establishments. In fact, one can even mix several hues within a given space. For example, draping round tables in mauve, squares in gold tones and deuces in peach allows the tables themselves to function as an integral part of the color scheme and can create a very exciting visual effect.

Another method of designing with tablecloths is to select patterned fabrics and place them under a clear glass top. Because there are literally hundreds of fabrics and patterns to choose from, this is an excellent approach to take when a one-of-a-kind, signature look is called for. And, depending on the specific pattern selected, from elegant florals to classic plaids, this treatment is workable in any type of setting.

Interest in hard surface tabletops grows

If tablecloths do not fit into your budget or do not coordinate with your theme or image, consider the myriad available hard surface tabletop materials. One of the most currently popular and widely used is plastic laminate. (Note: Formica is a brand name for this material.) While this material was once relegated to countertops or fast food properties, the trend now is to use plastic laminate tabletops in upscale cafes, clubs and cocktail lounges. The ease of maintenance, lower price tag and flexibility of design are some of the key reasons for the resurgent interest in this material. And, in terms of design, the aesthetic properties of plastic laminate are limited only by one's imagination.

Aside from the hundreds of colors, textures and patterns available in plastic laminate, the various edge treatments can add an extra design dimension. Use a self-edge laminate in the same or contrasting color to achieve a more contemporary or casual style. Add a stained or dyed wood border to coordinate with more traditional designs or with eclectic, less theme-oriented concepts.

Marble, wood and ceramic tile inlays continue to be popular choices for tabletops, and there are specific settings where these natural products offer the perfect design solution. The newcomer to this group of hard-surface materials is Corian. Because of its resemblance to marble, Corian has been used on vanity tops and bathroom fixtures for some time, but it has only recently been discovered to be a marvelous tabletop treatment. Corian is durable, highly stain resistant and easily maintained. And, because of its solid structure, it lends itself exceptionally well to custom edge treatments in a variety of shapes and styles. At this point, Corian is limited to white and off-white hues, but it can be obtained or inlaid with other materials, including wood and metal, to create additional texture and color. And, just as with plastic laminate, the look of a Corian tabletop blends well with any type of design and concept—from casual to elegant.

Table bases as part of the design

Just as with tabletops, table bases come in a multitude of shapes, sizes and finishes. Before deciding on the specific selection, determine if the base will be noticed. If the lighting level is low and the tables are draped, the chances of being able to identify the design of the table bases are slim. If the base will not be visible, a basic four-pronged cast-iron base is a prudent choice.

However, in restaurants that have open and airy spaces or multileveled floor plans, the style, shape and color of the table base can function as an integral part of the design. And, indeed, increased demand has stimulated the market to offer a wide variety of styles and finish selections. In the past, typical base treatments were either chrome, brass or black enamel. Today, pigments for bases range from fire-engine red to mint green, and plated finishes include copper, bronze and pewter.

Base bottoms, however, remain essentially unchanged. They fall into two generic groups: the popular four-pronged "spider" or the mushroom or cylinder type. The specific selection is based on design and budget and the kind of floor-covering material used. Within each major group, the patterns and designs span high-tech contemporary to classical treatments. ❑

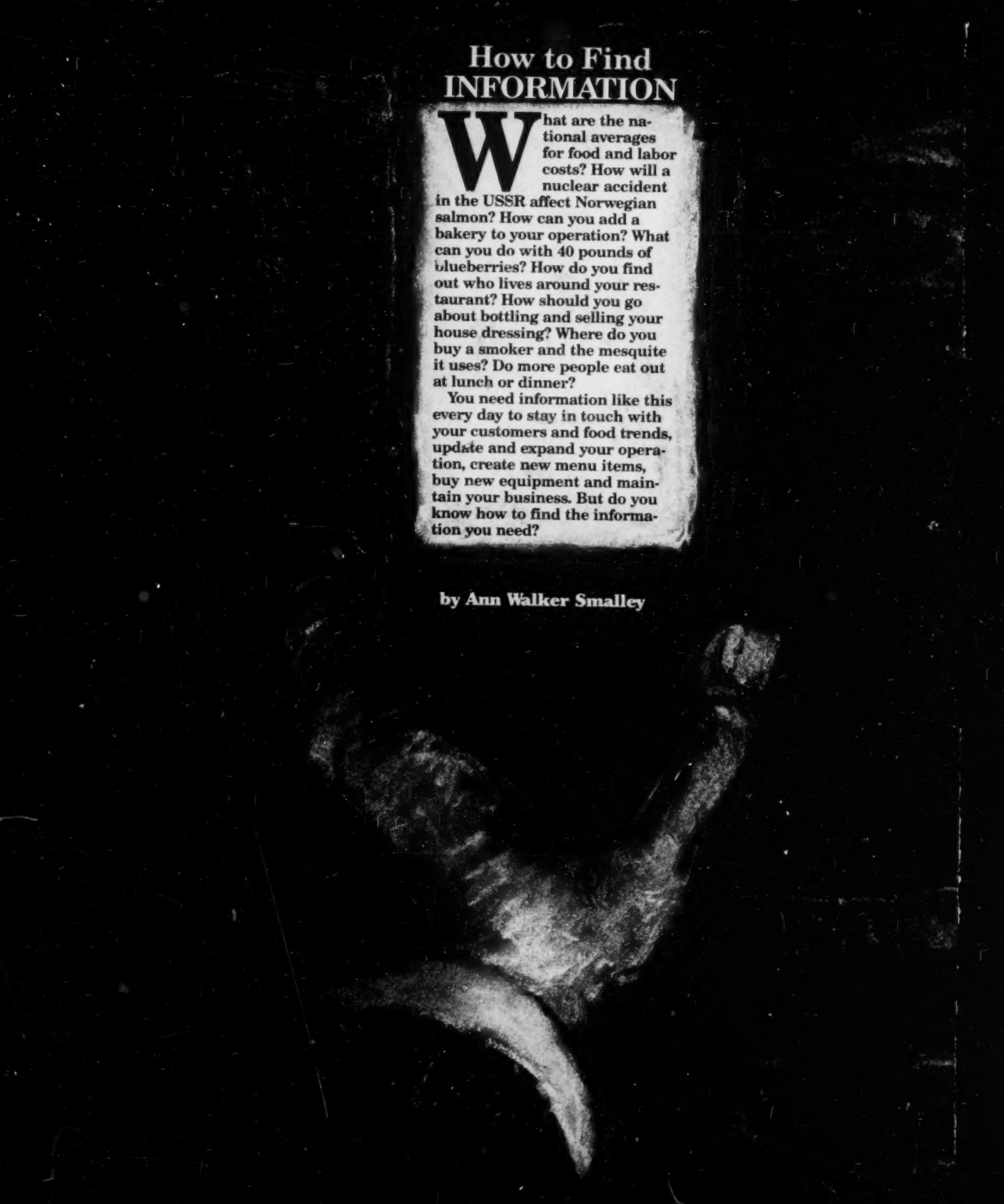
Ellen Brotman is president of Ellen I. Brotman Interior Designs, Inc. in Fairfax, VA, specializing in restaurant interior design and individual consultation.

How to Find INFORMATION

What are the national averages for food and labor costs? How will a nuclear accident in the USSR affect Norwegian salmon? How can you add a bakery to your operation? What can you do with 40 pounds of blueberries? How do you find out who lives around your restaurant? How should you go about bottling and selling your house dressing? Where do you buy a smoker and the mesquite it uses? Do more people eat out at lunch or dinner?

You need information like this every day to stay in touch with your customers and food trends, update and expand your operation, create new menu items, buy new equipment and maintain your business. But do you know how to find the information you need?

by Ann Walker Smalley



How to ask for what you need

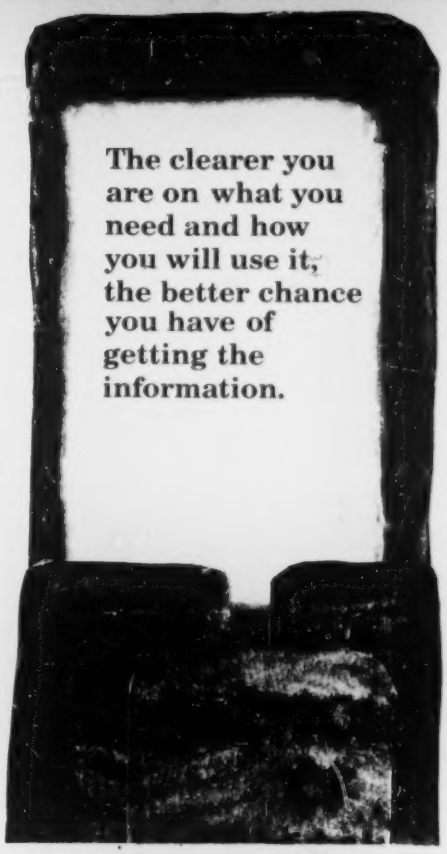
Just as with any other project, when you begin your search for information, you need a plan. You need to define what you want, determine where it might exist, find it and evaluate the results. Here are 10 steps toward finding the right information.

1. Define the information you need. Do you need statistics, technical advice, opinions, demographic data, historic profiles, recipes, techniques or a combination of these? What format should the information be in to be the most useful—charts and graphs, narrative description, step-by-step procedures, news articles, a bibliography? The clearer you are on what you need and how you will use it, the better chance you have of being able to convey the idea to someone else who may be able to supply it. This is especially important if you are using an intermediary—whether a librarian or another expert—who may need to explain what you need to someone else.

2. Don't ask for "everything" about a topic unless you know the topic is so narrow that "everything" means four or five lines of text or a chart. Break down the request into specific, manageable segments. If you do need to know everything about bakeries because you plan to add one to your current operation, start by requesting the basics and move on to recipes or promotions. Otherwise, "everything" may result in everything but what you need.

3. Choose the right source for the information. The sources of information are as varied as the need itself. One way to determine a source is to consider who might collect the information and why. Is there a group that benefits from such information or promotes the use of it? Have you ever supplied this type of information to any one either through official channels, such as the Bureau of Census or a licensing application, or through a survey from your chamber of commerce or a trade group? Maybe they have published the information or can make data available to you.

Ann Walker Smalley is information service and library manager for the National Restaurant Association.



Max Karl Winkler

Often a library or information center is a good first step. Libraries collect—and organize—material from commercial publishers, nonprofit groups, news sources, government agencies and other sources.

4. Ask the right questions. This is obvious advice, but it is often ignored. Be straightforward with the source—explain what you want and how you plan to use the data. Do not be surprised if the source asks you questions. That person is not being nosy. An information specialist is trained in the skill of finding information and must understand what you need specifically to determine how best to help you. You do not need to give an elaborate explanation, just enough information to put the request in context. Your answer can also help the searcher narrow the possible resources and can suggest ideas you may not have considered.

If you are planning to bottle your house dressing, for example, you should explain what type of dressing it is and how you plan to market the product instead of just asking for the names of bottle manufacturers. This not only helps narrow the choice of manufacturer, but also helps the researcher locate a pertinent study or article on developing signature products.

5. Mention organizations you have already contacted for the information to eliminate places you already know do not have the information you need. This will prevent fruitless duplication of effort, and it will reduce the time it takes to get an answer to you.

6. Do not ask another person to call—not even your secretary—unless he or she is able to explain and answer questions in detail and can make a decision about the suitability of the information. Otherwise, the process will be delayed as additional information is relayed back and forth.

7. There can be more than one answer to a question. There are multiple sources for most types of information, and unless there is a simple right or wrong answer—such as a phone number—you have to decide which source best meets your needs.

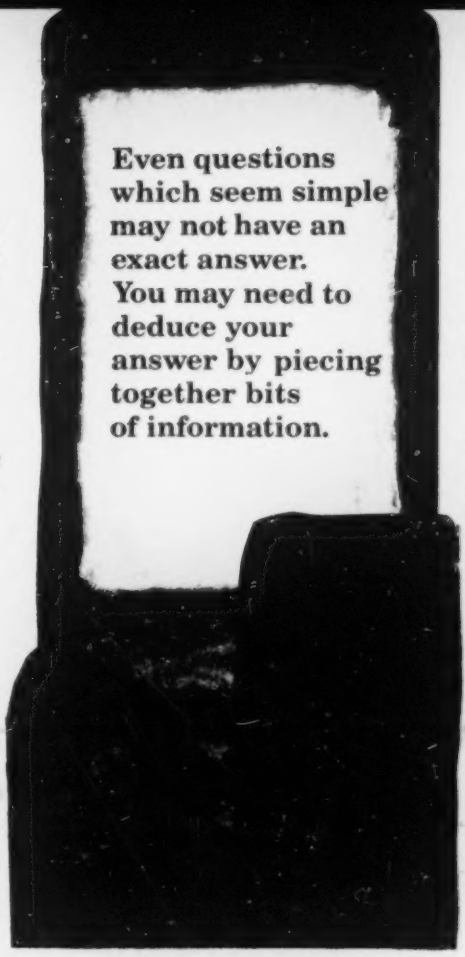
Always ask for the source and the date of the information someone is giving you and write them down. You may need to go back to that source, or you may wish to check its reliability elsewhere. You do not want to learn the hard way that you based your marketing plan on a survey that was done 20 years ago by an organization that has since disbanded because of lack of credibility.

8. Understand that some answers are hard to pin down. Since information does not generate itself, you cannot assume that the information you need is available. Someone had to decide that the information was useful—or profitable—to gather. Even questions which seem simple may not have an exact answer. You may need to deduce your answer by piecing together bits of information.

9. Be prepared to pay for some information, especially from organizations whose business is either information collection or publication rather than the promotion of an industry. Organizations that spend their time and energy compiling information in mailing lists, directories or guides do it for profit.

10. Know when to stop looking and how to use what information is available. In spite of your and others' best efforts, you may not be able to find everything you need or in the form you need it. When you reach

this point, it is time to evaluate the information you have to see if you can use it to answer your questions. Think in terms of why you need the information. Is it vital that you have the one fact exactly as stated, or can you use other data to arrive at a similar result? For example, if you are trying to determine the popularity of pizza, you probably do not need to know per capita pizza consumption. You may be able to use other information, such as the number of pizza restaurants and the percentage of meal occasions when pizza is ordered, to come up with an assessment of pizza popularity.


Even questions which seem simple may not have an exact answer. You may need to deduce your answer by piecing together bits of information.

A look at some basic sources

Much of the business information you need has been published somewhere. Government agencies, trade and professional associations, marketing councils, research organizations and commercial publishers all collect and publish information which you can use for planning and decision making.

Government information

The federal government is the major collector and publisher of statistics about the U.S. population and economy. The various departments and agencies, which produce these statistics annually, publish tens of thousands of reports on everything from consumption of cabbages to consumer spending habits. If you have never used any of these publications, the maze of numbers can be overwhelming. Here are brief profiles of the major agencies that collect statistics you may need.

☐ **The Bureau of the Census.** The Bureau of the Census collects population statistics, which include the number of inhabitants for the nation, regions, states, cities, counties and other areas. It also provides a wide variety of information on social and economic characteristics, such as household composition, ethnicity and income. It prepares analyses of social, economic and demographic issues and conducts economic surveys, such as the Censuses of Retail Trade, Wholesale Trade and Service Industries, to name a few. It publishes product overviews and a catalog and guide to census data, which are available for sale. It also publishes a handy summary of all types of statistics called *The Statistical Abstract of the United States*, which can be used as a guide to find additional statistics. Depending on the statistical series, data are available at varying breakdowns by counties or cities. In some cases, even smaller areas, such as business districts or blocks, are reflected.

The Bureau of the Census also sponsors State Data Centers (SDC), which include more than 1,300 local agencies and academic centers. These SDCs receive all of the bureau's products for their states and make the data available to the public. Many also provide special services, such as customized statistical profiles or profiles of specialized population groups, and collect statistics from state agencies.

☐ **Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).** BLS collects and disseminates statistics relating to employment and unemployment characteristics of the labor force, producer and consumer prices, wages, consumer expenditures, occupational safety and health and other labor force data. Most of the data are supplied voluntarily by business establishments and households.

☐ **Economic Research Service.** This agency, a part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), releases information about the agriculture situation and projected outlook. Another section of USDA, the Statistical Reporting Service, prepares estimates and reports on production, supply and prices for the agricultural economy.

State and local planning and development agencies also collect information and statistics on the economy of specific areas. Information on traffic patterns and transportation is available from local or state transportation authorities.

☐ **Department of the Treasury.** Another source of government information is the data individuals and businesses are required to file as part of doing business, such as income tax returns. The information collected concerning sources of income, deductions, type of business and other categories is compiled and published in various reports by this agency.

☐ **Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).** SEC requires corporations to file information about their finances. This information is available as 10(K) reports from the SEC. These reports can be used to learn about competitors since they include much financial information about a company, including the salaries of the top officials and names of major stockholders.

☐ **Published information.** In addition to statistics, governments publish handbooks, sourcebooks, compilations of laws and regulations, consumer information and films, and they operate information clearinghouses to provide their citizens with needed information. The U.S. Department of Commerce, for example, publishes the annual *Handbook of Franchising Opportunities*, a directory of businesses offering franchises with brief descriptions of the requirements for each. There are other agencies created to help businesses, including the Small Business Administration and Minority Business Development Agency. Many of these agencies publish guides for doing business or provide consulting services.

Where to get government information

The federal government's publisher is the Government Printing Office (GPO). The GPO operates regional bookstores

and a telephone order service. It publishes catalogs of selected publications and subscriptions. It also oversees a network of federal depository libraries which receive government publications, provided they allow the public to use them.

The federal government operates clearinghouses on various disciplines. These organizations provide telephone information services for questions in their fields, and they distribute documents published by their agency or others. For example, the Food and Nutrition Information Center, operated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, can provide information on a variety of nutrition research and foodservice management topics. It handles both print and audiovisual material.

The government has established electronic databanks, too, such as the National Technical Information Service (NTIS). NTIS is the central source for sale of government research reports on all aspects of business, economic, scientific and social research. Information from NTIS is available in several forms, including lists of published searches, database searches and other products.

NRA's Information Service can help

The National Restaurant Association's Information Service and Library (ISAL) receives dozens of questions every day just like the examples in the accompanying article. The information specialists handle between 75 and 100 calls a day, more than 20,000 annually—up from only 6,000 in 1980.

The ISAL is a specialized collection of current and historical information about the foodservice industry. The collection is growing constantly. It has 3,000 books and more than 140,000 articles on file. The ISAL receives more than 100 trade periodicals, which are scanned for appropriate information to add to the files. Other collections include the Great Menu Contest entries and winners and NRA archives of membership directories and publications.

The ISAL is moving into the electronic age of information retrieval. Since 1985, the library staff has been inputting abstracts of articles into an online database. While not yet available for general use, library staff can use this database to retrieve recent articles using key word searches. The ISAL is exploring the possibility of subscribing to commercially available online services and offering searches from these sources to members.

The major service the ISAL offers to NRA members is its reference service which includes information specialists who will try to find an answer or a source of information to almost any question. If the answer is not available in the NRA collection, ISAL staff will call other libraries, trade associations, manufacturers, government sources or other appropriate sources. For questions without answers, and there are some, ISAL staff tries to provide alternate sources of information.

NRA members receive top priority. Most questions are answered within one day, but sometimes it can take several weeks to compile all the information for a request. Follow-up materials are mailed out within one day of finding them.

Who calls ISAL? Calls come from the biggest chains and from small, independent operators as well as advertising agencies, equipment distributors, state associations, foodservice suppliers, government agencies and manufacturers.

ISAL also produces a biweekly service, "Information Services Abstracts." Library and research staff selects key articles from 10 to 12 trade publications and abstracts the important points in each. The abstracts can save you time and keep you up-to-date on what is in the trade press. For a free sample copy and subscription information, call ISAL.

The ISAL staff also take telephone/credit card orders for NRA publications and can answer questions about each publication.

"You never know what the next question will be," says Mary Edwards, one of two ISAL information specialists. "Being an information specialist is similar to being a detective. We're tracking down elusive information and piecing it together to get the final answer." "But," according to the other specialist, Lisa Cordes, "it's satisfying to be able to get that final fact that someone needs to answer the question."

If you want to know more about the NRA Information Service and Library, contact ISAL. ISAL staff will send you a packet with a copy of *Information Service Abstracts*, a sample list of subject headings for its files, a brief list of sources of statistics and how to order them and other facts and figures.

Trade associations

There are hundreds of associations formed to encourage the development of various professions or industries, and many of these associations collect statistics, perform research, conduct surveys, create promotional materials and provide continuing education and other services to their members. The *Encyclopedia of Associations*, a three-volume reference available in most libraries, lists more than 20,000 groups in the United States—from the American Dairy Association to the United Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Association. Many of these organizations can help you learn more about a particular industry and how it can help you. Some provide promotional materials as well. For example, the United Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Association produces a newsletter aimed at foodservice operators. Each issue highlights the fresh produce that will be available in the coming months.

Many professional associations also provide referrals for their members' services. Local chapters of the American Institute of Architects, for example, can refer architects on their rosters to callers.

Marketing councils, formed to promote awareness and use of specific products, provide promotional materials, recipes and statistics on use and consumption of their product as well as information on its handling and storage or special characteristics. The North American Blueberry Council will supply table tents, buttons, recipes and nutrition and handling information. Other groups, such as the Winegrowers of California, produce video training tapes and other information to help you promote their products in your operation.

Trade press / exhibit guides

The industry trade press collects and publishes much information. Special

issues are regularly produced that rank businesses, give menu censuses and offer buying guides or directories.

The NRA Show Guide also has a wealth of information about products and services which you may not need today but might need sometime. Trade shows of all types can be useful if you are looking for information. Electronics and computer shows, travel and tourism expositions, business development shows and others can all give you a chance to see firsthand what is being offered and a chance to talk to knowledgeable people.

Another source of information is educational seminars. In addition to the classroom instruction, you usually receive a textbook of some sort which compiles key information on the topic. Save this information for reference.

Local libraries

Don't overlook your local libraries, particularly if you need a broad range of information on local topics. Most libraries have a standard collection of reference resources, such as almanacs, directories, statistical sources, government information, indices and encyclopedae. While they may not have a wide range of foodservice information, libraries can help. They have professionally trained staff to help you retrieve what you need. Many libraries are now part of networks which offer computer linkage to other libraries' resources.

The information from most of these sources is available at little or no cost, usually less than $75 for publications and at cost for promotional materials.

Information organizations

If the thought of doing your own research or compiling statistics does not appeal to you or you do not have the time, there are organizations that will do it for you. Be sure that they understand the restaurant business before you hire them.

Information brokers will research a topic using electronic databanks and published sources. They will comb the literature of an industry to find reports, statistics, experts and other information to answer a request. Quite often these brokers are librarians who are skilled at retrieving hard-to-find information.

There are commercial services that track specific indicators, such as eating-out patterns, which are available as subscriptions. And there are organizations which take demographic data about an area and, using a computerized package, analyze it and produce reports for specific areas. These reports are used for site selection, market analysis and expansion studies.

Market research firms can collect, analyze and summarize data specifically for you—whether it is a market study to determine feasibility of a restaurant concept or product or an in-depth analysis of a specific market. There are also survey research groups or focus group organizations which can conduct research for you—from designing and administering questionnaires to writing a final report of the results. These reports vary in length and price from a few pages and a few hundred dollars to volumes of data and tens of thousands of dollars. ❑

ISAL has the answers

Whenever you have a question about foodservice, NRA's Information Service and Library can provide an answer or a source of information. Here are some sample questions to show the range of information the library staff has at its fingertips.

Q. What are the food and labor cost averages for food-only restaurants?

A. *The Restaurant Industry Operations Report,* produced annually by NRA, provides financial breakdowns for both food and food and beverage restaurants.

Q. Are there organizations that do business credit checks? I send fish to restaurants C.O.D. via special shipping, and I want to be sure a potential customer has good credit.

A. Yes, there are such companies. We found one in this area by contacting the association that represents them, The National Association of Credit Management.

Q. What is a monkey dish?

A. According to "Gourmet Table Service—A Professional Guide," a monkey dish is a small dessert or vegetable dish often included in a place setting.

Q. Are there any publications that can help me determine if a restaurant will be a success?

A. The NRA publication, *Conducting a Feasibility Study for a New Restaurant* is a how-to handbook prepared by the NRA research department. It will help you determine if a specific concept has potential to succeed in a certain location.

Q. Have any restaurants had promotions benefiting charities?

A. By reviewing the files of articles on promotions in the library, we sent reports of such promotions in other restaurants. They ranged from support of walk-a-thons to ugly bartender contests.

Q. I want to do a Victorian Christmas Dinner at my club. Can you help?

A. Library staff reviewed holiday files and cookbooks representing historic cooking and supplied several menus and recipes.

Q. I saw a product at the NRA Show, but I don't know what it is called or who makes it. Can you help me?

A. Such questions rely on the memory of NRA staff who went to the Show, on knowledge of who makes what and on the listings in the NRA Show Guide. But with not much more information than what the product does, it is often luck, not skill, that finds the exact item!

Q. Is there a book that will give market research techniques?

A. *Market Research for the Restaurateur,* an NRA research department publication, is a practical handbook on techniques. It will help you gather the information you need to make an informed decision.

Q. Who makes the paper for tea bags?

A. There are four manufacturers, according to the Tea Association of America.

Q. What happened to customer traffic in the winter of 1986? Did quick service traffic increase?

A. Yes. According to CREST, traffic in December–January–February was up 2.7 percent from one year earlier. Quick service traffic was up 7.4 percent.

Fall Board meeting report

NRA Board votes to form new foundation

NRA Board members, from left to right, Guss Dussin, William Naegele, Paul Lazar, Harry Klingeman and Jerry Burtenshaw at the fall Board meeting.

In a unanimous decision at its fall meeting in September, the National Restaurant Association (NRA) Board voted to consolidate NRA's educational activities with those of the National Institute for the Foodservice Industry (NIFI) to form a combined successor organization. Entitled The Educational Foundation of the National Restaurant Association, the new organization will become effective January 1, 1987.

This move transfers responsibility for the day-to-day functioning of NRA's educational programs department to the new educational foundation, although the department will continue to be housed at NRA headquarters in Washington, DC, and funded by NRA.

The Board felt that, in addition to better achieving the educational goals set forth in NRA's five-year strategic plan, the consolidation would result in a full-service, broad-based educational program for the entire industry.

The new institute, which is classified as a 501(c)(3) organization with nonprofit status and no lobbying privileges, will be administered by the executive director of NIFI, who will report to NRA's executive vice president. The new foundation will be governed by a 30-member board of trustees, a separate, autonomous body, which will exercise all normal oversight and fiduciary responsibilities. The board of trustees will consist of the three elected officers of the National Restaurant Association, 13 members appointed by NRA's three elected executive officers, 11 members of supplier firms and three members of academia.

Here is a look at some other actions arising from the fall meeting of the NRA Board of Directors:

□ The Convention Committee will host a special "Salute to Excellence" Dinner to honor celebrity restaurateurs and outstanding student culinarians on Tuesday night during the annual NRA Show. NRA Past President Ted J. Balestreri (Sardine Factory, Inc., Monterey, CA) will chair a committee overseeing the dinner. Other committee members are NRA Past Presidents Walter Conti (Conti Cross Keys Inn, Doylestown, PA) and Thad Eure, Jr. (The Angus Barn, Ltd., Raleigh, NC).

□ General admission rates to the NRA Show will be raised to $10 for pre-registration and $20 after the pre-registration date.

□ The Restaurants of Oregon Association and the National Restaurant Association have entered a joint membership agreement.

□ The Political Education Committee agreed to raise $500,000 for fiscal year 1986–87 in order to magnify the industry's presence in Washington, DC.

□ The Communications Committee suggested establishing a special task force to coordinate an active industry response to the threat of mandatory ingredient labeling.

□ A motion was passed that all events conducted under the auspices of the National Restaurant Association must be held at member establishments and that nonmember facilities will be used only when member establishments are not available.

□ The Executive Committee agreed to invite a member of the board of the Club Managers Association to join the NRA Board on a one-year trial basis.

Restaurateurs meet with congressional candidates

NRA's political action and political education committees hosted the first of several regional fund-raising events on September 9, 1986. It was jointly sponsored by NRA and the California Restaurant Association. The event, which was held at Jimmy's in Beverly Hills, CA, introduced area restaurateurs and foodservice professionals to four congressional candidates: Dale Bell, a South Dakota restaurateur (Bell's Steak House, Spearfish, SD) who is running for Congress, and Elton Gallegly, Rob Scribner and George Woolverton, who are all running for congressional seats in California. NRA Past President Ted J. Balestreri (Sardine Factory, Inc., Monterey, CA) was the honorary chairman.

Candidate Dale Bell talked with PAC Chairman W.W. "Biff" Naylor at NRA's first annual congressional review dinner.

Similar fund-raisers are planned for Boston, Chicago and New York. These local events are part of the political action and political education committees' ongoing efforts to increase the involvement of foodservice professionals in the political process.

—Dorothy Dee

Fisher's law #76

6 ways to identify a company in decline

Different business organizations project different images to customers, suppliers, consultants or other visitors. A former professorial colleague of mine took great pride in his self-proclaimed ability to "size up" (or "size down") any organization within the first two minutes he set foot on the premises. He was a social psychologist, not a financial analyst, and he based his conclusions on such things as the type, style and color of artwork that was exhibited in the environment, the rapidity and graciousness with which he was greeted, the way employees interacted with one another, the cleanliness of the public areas and the tidiness of office areas. He made some valid points and caused me to sharpen my own observational powers when I visited a company for one reason or another. Through the years, I have identified six major nonfinancial elements or clues that tell me a company is on the verge of, or has started, a decline even though "the numbers" may not yet reflect it.

1. There is a generalized preoccupation with business expansion to the exclusion of improving existing operations. Many companies on a fast growth track overreach their ability. It is one thing to "touch," but another thing to "hold." That is to say, such firms are so future-oriented that they lose sight and sensitivity to the market/customer base that needs to be satisfied now. Such companies don't keep business. They lose it out the back door as fast as they bring it in the front door. They are "growth junkies," seeking expediency rather than stability, living for a grand tomorrow with little thought of survival today.

2. Risk is avoided at any cost. Some companies, once they have secured a niche in the marketplace and have enjoyed some measure of success, simply stop doing what made them successful in the first place, i.e., taking calculated controlled risks; experimenting with new ideas, products, services and systems; and bringing qualified people into the organization. In contrast to expansion at any cost, there is an avoidance of risk at all costs. Because the world is not standing still, the secure market/customer niche can be eroded as quickly as it was formed. Such companies may be "sparkling comets" during their ascendancy period, but they can burn out quickly, never to be seen again.

3. The company attracts and retains people who are most concerned with occupational security. Such companies experience very little employment turnover at management levels and do not attract energetic, creative personnel. The organization becomes the parent substitute where one gets along fine if one does what one is told to do, and no one gets in trouble by doing nothing. There is an emphasis on conformity. New ideas are not sought or appreciated. Mediocrity becomes the acceptable standard. Imagination is ridiculed. A high production level is considered to be "rate-busting," and innovation is considered to be radical. Usually there is overstaffing. There is an excuse or delay mentality rather than a get-it-done outlook and there is little, if any, conflict because there is an absence of dynamic, constructive tension. The operating premise is that "if I go along, I'll get along" and "I won't make any waves."

4. There is an absence of self-development at senior management levels. Top management is too busy (or too comfortable) to undertake activities directed toward professional self-development. They, or their key people, do not go to conferences, seminars or other activities where there is an active exchange of ideas. They believe they have paid their dues and are entitled to sit back and reap the rewards. They may delude themselves that they are staying current by reading consumer and trade press articles and reports. They do not realize that all trends have countertrends, that the marketplace is becoming increasingly differentiated, and that there are a lot of cross-currents and shifting winds that can have an immediate effect on the company. In some cases, once you have read about a trend, it is already over. That means it was a fad.

5. The company operates in a dull, tired, gray environment. There is an absence of pep and humor in the people who work in the company. Employees lack bounce in their gait. They wear frowns or expressionless faces instead of smiles. Their heads are bowed instead of uplifted, and they seem haggard instead of stimulated. They tend to procrastinate; be undisciplined in enforcing working hours, lunch breaks and coffee breaks; engage in social (not business) chit chat; and spend a long time reading newspapers or doing crossword puzzles. Telephones are allowed to ring several times before they are answered; telephones are left unattended; and mail remains unanswered for days. There is a listless pace except at quitting time. Physical facilities are scruffy and dirty, the landscaping is unkept, and the environment is just too lackadaisical.

6. The company doesn't ask, and it doesn't listen. When visitors approach the company, they are viewed as necessary evils. Employees say, "This place would be great if it weren't for the customers" or "The suppliers are the enemy." Visitors are not looked upon as information resources, they are not asked for their opinions, and their opinions are not respected if they are volunteered. There may be "lip service" or "mail service" for obtaining feedback, but it is a mechanical exercise not an attempt for a constructively critical analysis. Senior management thinks it knows all the answers, so there is little, if any, use of outside consultants. Communication doesn't flow, it drains. Employees do not get straight answers to reasonable questions; they get double-talk or "politically straddled" answers.

When one of these corporate maladies is present, usually other maladies show up soon thereafter.

Fisher's 76th law: To be terse, if you are inclined toward decline you better reverse.

Tracking employee turnover

A restaurant's W-2s can be used to determine employee turnover.

At a time when labor shortages are affecting many parts of the country, hiring and retaining employees is becoming increasingly important to restaurateurs. Government statistics reveal that foodservice occupations have higher than average separation rates. (See ***Restaurants USA (NRA News)***, June/July 1986.) This means that employees leave foodservice occupations at a more frequent rate than they leave other occupations. Of course, this can be explained in part by the large number of teenage employees who leave their jobs to return to school and by the part-time, seasonal nature of many foodservice jobs. Separation rates tell only part of the story.

Separation rates do not provide a measure of employee turnover from the restaurateur's point of view. In fact, little information on industry turnover rates exists.

For that reason, the *1986 Restaurant Operations Survey* conducted by NRA and Laventhol & Horwath in early 1986 asked operators to specify how many W-2s the restaurant sent out last year. The number of W-2s provides a measure of the total number of individuals who worked at the establishment at some time during 1985. Turnover for 1985 is measured by dividing the total number of W-2s by the average number of employees.

Survey results reveal that the employee turnover rate* in 1985 was 2.1 for restaurants serving food and alcoholic beverages. It was 2.4 for restaurants serving food only. The accompanying table depicts turnover rates by type of restaurant.

These data suggest that

- turnover is generally higher when the ratio of part-time to full-time employees is relatively high and
- turnover is generally lower in full menu establishments compared to limited menu restaurants.

Further analysis is needed to fully establish a connec-

Full and part-time employment figures

Operations serving food and alcoholic beverages generally have a larger number of part-time employees

	Median number of employees working		
	Full time	Part-time (20–35 hours)	Part-time (less than 20 hours)
All operations serving food and alcoholic beverages	**12.0**	**15.0**	**8.0**
Type of restaurant			
Full menu—tableservice	20.0	18.0	10.0
Limited menu—tableservice	4.0	5.0	6.0
Menu theme			
Steak/seafood	20.0	20.0	10.0
American	20.0	18.0	10.0
Continental	12.0	14.5	5.0
Pizza	4.0	5.0	6.0
All operations serving food only	**16.0**	**10.0**	**8.0**
Type of restaurant			
Limited menu—no tableservice	3.0	9.0	6.0
Coffee shop	42.5	9.5	12.0

1985 employee turnover rates

Operations serving food only have a slightly higher turnover rate

	Number of employees*	Number of W-2s	Turnover rate
All operations serving food and alcoholic beverages	**37.5**	**80**	**2.1**
Type of restaurant			
Full menu—tableservice	45.0	90	2.0
Limited menu—tableservice	18.0	54	3.0
Menu theme			
Steak/seafood	45.0	100	2.2
American	50.0	100	2.0
Continental	33.0	64	1.9
Pizza	15.0	50	3.3
All operations serving food only	**37.0**	**87**	**2.4**
Type of restaurant			
Limited menu—no tableservice	15.5	40	2.6
Coffee shop	42.5	96	2.3

Note: Categories reported separately have 20 or more respondents providing data. The total number of respondents providing data for food and beverage restaurants was 231. For food only operations, the total number was 92.
Source: *1986 Restaurant Operations Survey*

**The employee turnover rate is estimated from respondents providing data on both total employment and W-2s. It is derived by dividing the median number of employees into the median number of W-2s. The rate shown represents an average for the survey respondents.*

tion between the mix of part-time and full-time employees to turnover. Logic suggests, however, that relatively high turnover rates are explained, in part, by a large proportion of employees working few hours.

Turnover and the labor shortage

NRA's *Current Issues Report* "Foodservice and the Labor Shortage" suggests that the flexible nature of the labor force can be used to the advantage of the foodservice industry by increasing the number of hours worked per employee. As the teenage population began to decline in the early 1980s, the restaurant industry maintained its annual gain in total hours worked by increasing average weekly hours per employee.

The results of the *1986 Restaurant Industry Operations Study* suggest that fewer employees who work less than 20 hours per week could also help to lessen costly employee turnover.

Small Business

The IRS conducts workshops to help small business owners understand their tax rights and responsibilities. Contact the IRS for information.

A PUBLIC SERVICE MESSAGE FROM THE INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE

Research review

Consumers ask for meals for children

Restaurants can make a good impression by paying attention to a number of little "extras" identified in NRA's market segmentation survey Consumer Nutrition Concerns and Restaurant Choices. *If the need for such an addition is appropriate for your market, incorporating it into your establishment could make a big difference and result in increased customer counts and frequency of visits.*

This article reviews consumer responses to one particular amenity identified by the survey—meals prepared specifically for children. Customer interest in portion-size alternatives, salad bars, fresh foods and special menu items will be covered in a future issue.

Offering customers the opportunity to order special meals for children may be more important to your patrons—and to your business—than you realize.

According to NRA's survey *Consumer Nutrition Concerns and Restaurant Choices*, 72 percent of all adults surveyed strongly agree that restaurants should offer meals specially prepared for children. Not surprisingly, women between the ages of 25 and 54 and consumers who have children are most likely to strongly agree with this statement.

Survey results also show that consumers with incomes greater than $40,000 are more likely than other income segments to agree that restaurants should offer special meals for children. A large proportion of the households in this income group are ones where both husband and wife work. These parents are inclined to take their children out to eat with them and have the income to do so. It is also worth noting that these upper-income households are responsible for the lion's share of restaurant spending.

Finally, as the frequency of restaurant patronage increases, so does interest in meals specially prepared for children. This suggests that consumers who eat out frequently would be inclined to take their children to restaurants that make the effort to appeal to their needs.

Not a passing fad

Demographic and economic data suggest that customers will continue to look for restaurants that offer children's meals. Even though the baby boom generation is staying single longer, marrying later—if at all—and having fewer children, population

Percent of adults who think restaurants should offer meals for children

Nearly three-quarters of all consumers believe there should be special meals for children in restaurants.

Demographic groups	Percent who strongly agree
All adults	72%
Women	75
Men	68
Income	
$40,000 and over	76
$20,000 to $40,000	71
Under $20,000	71
Marital status	
Married with children	81
Married without children	66
Single	70
Frequency of dining out*	
Six or more times	75
Three to five times	74
One to two times	70
None	64
Region	
West	77
East	75
South	70
North Central	68

**Average number of dining occasions during a two-week period.*
Source: *Consumer Nutrition Concerns and Restaurant Choices*, NRA.

projections suggest the number of children occupying seats at restaurants is actually increasing.

In 1985, children under 14 years of age accounted for 20 percent of our population (48.1 million), up about 600,000 from five years earlier. Bureau of the Census projections—based on recent levels of fertility, birth expectations and social and economic trends—predict that by 1990 this group will increase by another 3.3 million.

The number of children under five years of age (a primary special menu market) is also expected to rise significantly, reaching 19 million by 1990. Already, the number of these youngsters is higher than at any time since the 1960s.

In addition, expenditure data confirm the importance of households with children as major contributors to industry sales. According to Bureau of Labor statistics, in 1984, households with children under 18 accounted for 44 percent of total household spending for food away from home.

Targeting the market

To effectively target the children's market, it is important to look at the general pattern of adults dining out with their children. For instance, according to CREST, parties of adults with children under 12 years of age make up the largest portion of customers at the evening meal and the evening or afternoon snack period. Consequently, these meal occasions offer the best opportunities to attract families with a special children's menu.

CREST data also point out the types of restaurants families with children are most apt to visit. For instance, among fast food establishments, pizza, ice cream or hamburger restaurants are top choices. In the midscale segment, Mexican and family steak restaurants are favorites; and for these restaurants in particular, a special children's menu may be an especially effective marketing tool. Other restaurants interested in targeting the family market may want to consider including items, such as pizzas or hamburgers, on a special children's menu.

Children in the population by year (000)

The number of children is rising

Year	Under 5 years	5 to 13 years
1960	20,341	32,965
1965	19,824	35,754
1970	17,166	36,672
1975	16,121	33,919
1980	16,457	31,080
1985	18,453	29,654
1990*	19,198	32,189

*Projected

Source: *Projections of the Population of the United States, By Age, Sex, and Race; 1983 to 2080*, Bureau of the Census.

Share of total spending for food away from home by household composition

Families are the biggest spenders on restaurant meals

Household composition	Share of spending
Single person	29%
Husband and wife only	21
Husband and wife with at least one child	40
Single parent with at least one child under age 18	4
Other husband and wife households	6

Source: *Consumer Expenditure Survey, 1984*, Bureau of Labor Statistics, June 1986.

To order *Consumer Nutrition Concerns and Restaurant Choices*

This market segmentation study makes a major contribution to understanding what motivates consumers when it comes to making restaurant choices. It divides the market into four groups: traditional consumers, weight conscious consumers, health conscious consumers and the uncommitted. By combining data on dining out behavior and demographics with menu choice information and health and nutrition attitudes, the survey suggests numerous marketing opportunities.

NRA is publishing *Consumer Nutrition Concerns and Restaurant Choices* in two volumes. The 50-page "Summary Volume" provides a general understanding of survey results. The summary volume (CS984) sells for $25 to NRA members, $50 to non-members.

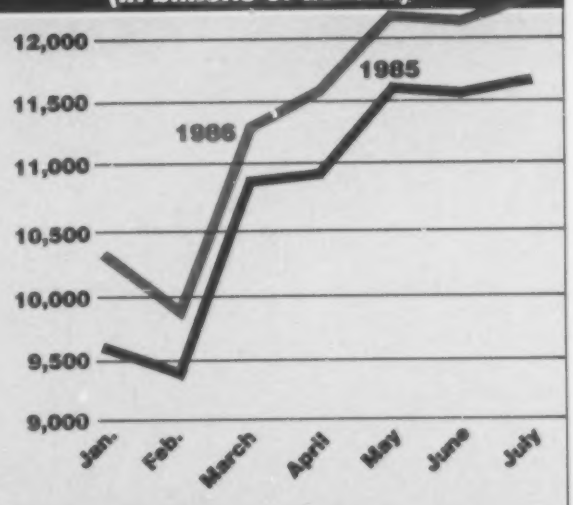
Those interested in using survey results for their own marketing plans will want to purchase the "Detailed Tables, Volume II." The detailed tables (CS985) sell for $50 to members and $100 to non-members. An additional 10 percent in each case is levied for postage and handling.

Residents of Washington, DC, must add six percent sales tax. Illinois residents must add seven percent sales tax. Chicago, IL, residents must add an additional one percent sales tax, bringing their sales tax total to eight percent. To place an order, contact NRA, 311 First St., N.W., Washington, DC 20001 or call (800)424-5156, or (202)638-6100. **Payment must accompany all orders.** Credit card telephone orders are accepted. Please specify order numbers.

Industry indicators

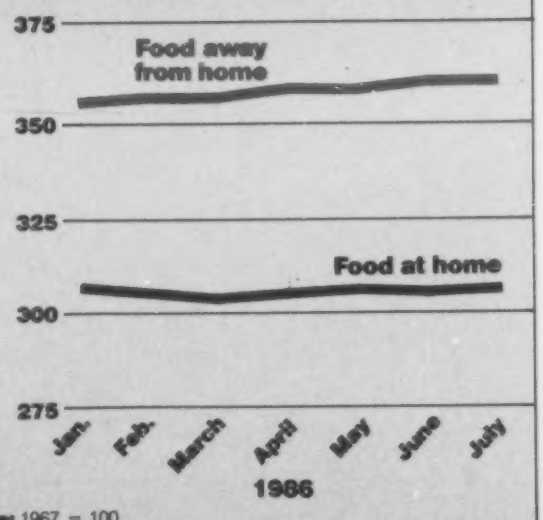
Changes in the economy directly influence restaurant industry performance. To help restaurateurs keep track of changes, the National Restaurant Association periodically publishes this report.

Eating and drinking place sales (in billions of dollars)



Note: Figures subject to revision.
Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census

Consumer Price Index (CPI) for food at home vs. food away from home



Note: 1967 = 100
Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

Industry index

Retail sales (millions)	July 1986	Percent change*	Year-to-date July 1986	Percent change*
All retailers	$119,818	4.0%	$800,542	4.4%
Eating and drinking places	$ 12,447	6.6%	$ 80,199	6.5%
Food stores	$ 25,579	5.9%	$168,681	4.6%

Source: U.S Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census

Consumer Prices (July 1986)	Percent change*	Percent change year-to-date*
Food away from home	3.9%	3.8%
Food at home	3.1%	1.8%
All items less food	1.2%	2.2%
All items	1.6%	2.3%

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

Eating place indicators (millions)	May 1986	Percent change*	Year-to-date 1986	Percent change*
Eating place sales	$11,519	7.6%	$51,328	6.8%
Real eating place sales	—	3.6%	—	3.0%

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census; U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics; NRA

Employment and earnings	June 1986	Percent change*
Total eating and drinking place employment	6118.8**	3.3%
Nonsupervisory employment	5563.8**	3.1
Average weekly hours	26.0	−1.1
Average hourly earnings	$ 4.32	0.2
Average weekly earnings	$ 112.32	−0.9

**Percent change is over same period in prior year.*
***Thousands*
Note: Figures are subject to revision.
Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

Other economic indicators

	1986 Quarter of month	Percent change*
Gross National Product (GNP)	II	5.4%
Disposable personal income	May	3.5%
	June	5.6%
	July	5.7%
Consumer confidence[1]	May	96.1%
	June	97.5%
	July	95.4%
Total private employment	May	2.7%
	June	2.6%
	July	2.9%
Civilian unemployment rate[2]	May	7.3%
	June	7.1%
	July	6.9%

**Percent is over same period in prior year.*
[1]Figures indicate actual value of the index (1985 = 100)
[2]Percentage indicates actual unemployment rate
Note: Figures are subject to revision.

Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis; U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics; The Conference Board

1 NEW ENGLAND

Location: Winooski, VT
NRA member: David Ely
Operation: Waterworks
Profile: Fullservice restaurant
In business: 5 years
Seats: 145 winter, 185 summer
Meals served: Lunch and dinner

"There's been a lot of development in and around Burlington," says **Peter Brady,** co-owner of Waterworks. "The local economy is strong." The restaurant's business has been steady, too, and the owners recently opened another restaurant in Lebanon, NH.

Diners are drawn to Waterworks for both the setting and the versatile menu that ranges from sandwiches and salads to filets. The restaurant is situated over a waterfall and the rapids of the rushing Winooski River.

The restaurant draws two main types of customers: students from nearby University of Vermont and Saint Michael's College during the school year and tourists during the summer. Not surprisingly, the owner's summer marketing consists primarily of advertisements in vacation and dining guides.

2 MIDDLE ATLANTIC

Location: York, PA
NRA member: Burt Holleran
Operation: The Meadowbrook Inn
Profile: Fullservice restaurant
In business: 3 years
Seats: 190
Meals served: Lunch and dinner

"York's economy is very good," says **Sherm Koller,** manager of The Meadowbrook Inn, a recently restored 19th-century, Georgian Revival home. "Our business is up 22 percent."

Under the home's original chandeliers, customers dine on American and continental cuisine. Veal Meadowbrook, a combination of veal and American crabmeat, is one of the inn's most requested entrees. Among the delicacies prepared at the on-premises bakery are Black Forest Cake and Silhouette Cake, an airy dessert combining both light and dark dough.

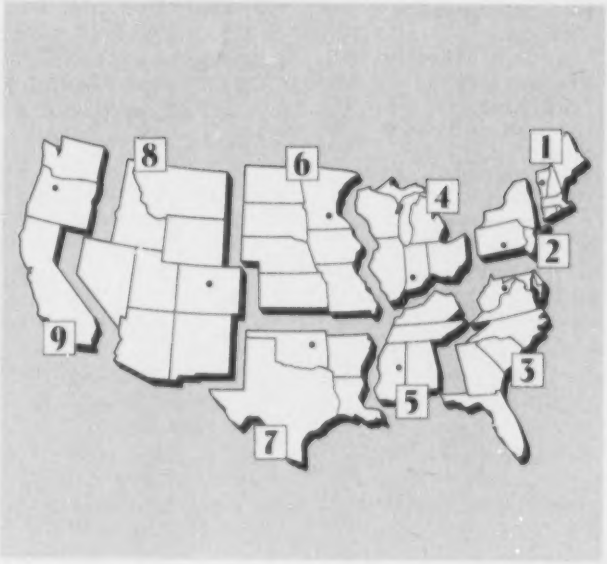
To ensure that his restaurant will remain busy, Koller's ongoing advertising campaign is aimed at "keeping the inn's name in front of the public at all times." The Meadowbrook advertises in all area newspapers as well as many out-of-town magazines.

3 SOUTH ATLANTIC

Location: Davis, WV
NRA member: Franklin R. Engler
Operation: The Oriskany Inn
Profile: Fullservice restaurant
In business: 2 years
Seats: 66
Meals served: Dinner

"The local economy is slowly moving along," says **Tom Wynn,** manager of The Oriskany Inn. Business is slightly better than last summer at this resort-area restaurant.

The inn is situated only two miles from the entrance to Canaan Valley State Park. The small dining room is open on three sides to treat diners to a breathtaking view of the valley. Lobster, steaks and veal are among the menu offerings, and surf and turf is particularly popular. For dessert, customers enjoy homemade cheesecakes, pies and cakes.



The Oriskany's past attempts at local marketing produced unsatisfactory results. The menu prices, Wynn believes, are a bit too steep for area residents. Instead, the inn relies on tourists and visitors to the state park to comprise the bulk of their clientele.

4 EAST NORTH CENTRAL

Location: Lebanon, OH
NRA member: Jackson Reynolds
Operation: The Golden Lamb Inn
Profile: Fullservice country inn
In business: 183 years
Seats: 420
Meals served: Lunch and dinner

The Golden Lamb Inn has been serving traditional American food since 1803 in Lebanon, OH, a bedroom community located between Cincinnati and Dayton. The inn maintains a steady business throughout the year, says assistant manager **Fred Compton,** by bolstering its slow seasons with innovative promotions.

The Golden Lamb's "Bounty of Harvest" promotion takes place in the first two weeks of November as a lead-in to Thanksgiving. "We celebrate Thanksgiving as a season, not as a single day," says Compton. During this promotion, wild game, such as venison, elk and goose, is added to the regular menu.

During the last two weeks of September, the inn ties into the local farm markets with an "Apple-a-Day" celebration. Hard cider and unusual apple dishes are featured. The most popular dessert is Four-Way Apple Pie, which can be ordered with one of four toppings: apple crumb, a la mode, melted cheese or hot rum sauce.

The Golden Lamb's lunch and dinner menus change daily, but popular roasted dishes, such as leg of lamb, turkey and pork loin, remain on the menu 365 days a year. Nineteen restored guest rooms, all furnished in antiques, are available to overnight visitors.

5 EAST SOUTH CENTRAL

Location: Jackson, MS

NRA member: John Dennery
Operation: Dennery's
Profile: Fullservice restaurant
In business: 38 years
Seats: 250
Meals served: Lunch and dinner

Seafood, Midwestern steaks and prime rib have been traditional favorites at Dennery's since 1948. Lately, however, the restaurant has been preparing these specialties in nontraditional ways—from Cajun-style preparations such as blackened red snapper or steak to the experimental combinations that are a trademark of nouvelle cuisine.

In late August, owner **John Dennery** staged a culinary show to give the public a chance to see how the dishes are prepared. More than 200 people watched the chef prepare dishes, such as *Chicken Angelo*—chicken breasts sauteed in a sherry sauce with artichoke hearts and mushrooms. He mailed invitations to his regular customers and also advertised in the local paper.

Several television stations and newspapers covered the event. The public's reaction was so positive that Dennery has already scheduled another demonstration, featuring holiday cooking and hors d'oeuvres, for October.

6 WEST NORTH CENTRAL

Location: Minneapolis, MN
NRA member: U.S. Restaurants
Operation: La Tortue
Profile: Fullservice restaurant
In business: 5 years
Seats: 200
Meals served: Lunch and dinner

Summer is the slowest time of the year for La Tortue (The Turtle), an elegant restaurant located in the heart of Minneapolis' financial district.

Since **U.S. Restaurants** purchased La Tortue earlier this year, it has tried to strengthen La Tortue's marketing position by extending its hours to capture the after-the-theater crowd and other late-night diners and by offering free transportation to and from the restaurant. A complimentary Mercedes-Benz chauffeur service picks up customers anywhere in the downtown Minneapolis area, delivers them to the restaurant and returns them home or to their office after their meal.

The continental menu at La Tortue includes Scandinavian gravlax (marinated salmon), New Zealand leg of lamb Chateaubriand, fresh fruit tarts and a Grand Marnier souffle.

7 WEST SOUTH CENTRAL

Location: Tulsa, OK
NRA member: J. Richard Hunt
Operation: Ricardo's Restaurant
Profile: Mexican restaurant
In business: 11 years
Seats: 150
Meals served: Lunch and dinner

"You've got to look far and wide for some good news around here," says **J. Richard Hunt,** owner of Ricardo's. Tulsa's economy is based on oil and agriculture, two industries Hunt termed as "hurting." Many businesses, including a few restaurants, have closed.

Why then is Ricardo's doing well, with sales up slightly from last year? Hunt attributes his success to his restaurant being "very independent and very inexpensive." Ricardo's Mexican food is served in a relaxed atmosphere, and Hunt's customers include many regulars who "come to eat, not to have a dining experience." The restaurant's combination plates are a particularly good value, he adds. They are almost as popular as the house specialty, chiles rellenos.

Although Hunt has tried some radio and print marketing on a limited basis in the past, he did not find it to be especially effective. Because of Tulsa's troubled economy, he would prefer "not to mess with things" since he seems to have found a formula that works.

8 MOUNTAIN

Location: Boulder, CO
NRA member: Paul Turley
Operation: The Harvest Restaurant and Bakery
Profile: Two natural food restaurants and bakeries
In business: 9 years
Seats: 240
Meals served: Breakfast, lunch and dinner

"This summer's business was not quite as good as expected," says **Paul Turley,** co-owner of The Harvest Restaurant and Bakery. Economic conditions throughout the state "are not the best," he adds, and Boulder in particular is suffering because of cutbacks at one of the city's largest employers.

After a recent study showed that 80 percent of The Harvest's business comes from a highly concentrated residential neighborhood encircling the restaurant, the owners decided to try coupon marketing for the first time. Turley says he was quite skeptical initially, but he has been won over by the striking success of Val-Pak couponing at the restaurant's Denver location.

Both Harvest restaurants specialize in natural foods, many of which are prepared from scratch at the in-house bakery. One of the most popular breakfast offerings, Swiss Granola, consists of homemade granola topped with fresh fruit and yogurt. Later in the day, the *Turkey-Cashew Crunch Sandwich* and *Broccoli-Walnut Casserole* are two nut-filled favorites. The meals are so nutritious, says Turley, that few customers can find reason to pass up the restaurant's frozen yogurt or homemade pie and cobbler.

9 PACIFIC

Location: Milwaukee, OR
NRA member: Ron Kozad
Operation: Joe's Warehouse Restaurant
Profile: Fullservice restaurant
In business: 8 years
Seats: 130
Meals served: Lunch and dinner

Business is down at Joe's Warehouse Restaurant says manager **Bob McPhail,** but it is not as bad as expected. "The area's economy," he admits, "isn't all that great." The restaurant has not had much success with promotions. "The people," says McPhail, "just don't have the money to spend."

The lunch business at Joe's remains strong, however, because the restaurant is located in a crowded industrial complex. The menu includes steaks and seafood, but sandwiches are the best-sellers for the time-conscious, lunch-hour crowd. The Warehouse Club, an oversized club sandwich, is second in popularity to *The Handtruck*, a grilled roast beef and turkey sandwich topped with Swiss and cheddar cheeses.

—David Slater

Fishy new fashion is no fluke

Restaurants wishing to lure seafood lovers might consider having their waiters and waitresses wear fish around their necks—fish neckties, that is. The ties, retailing between $15 and $22, are catching on throughout the country.

Mark Abramoff, whose original idea spawned the ties, says the neckwear will gross about one million dollars this year. The realistically colored fish, eyes wide open, hang head down with their tail at the wearer's neck. The finny fashions are available in salmon, muskie, tuna, trout and walleyed and northern pike.

Abramoff's Milwaukee-based company, Ralph Marlin & Co., plans new lines—largemouth bass, catfish, barracuda, mackerel and brightly colored ocean fish. Skinny eel and gar ties for women and children's bow ties in "little perch and smelts" may follow.

—Washington Times

All aboard the lunch train

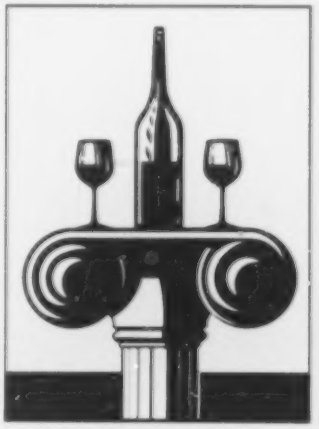
The railroad cars at Virginia Power Company's nuclear plant in Mineral, VA, are using dinner bells instead of train whistles to attract their customers. The two 1940s-era passenger cars serve as the new employee cafeterias at the North Anna Power Station.

Rather than spend one million dollars to build a new cafeteria, the utility bought and refurbished the two cars, built originally for the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad, for $80,000. They hold 104 hungry passengers. The servers wear railroad attire.

The meals have proved so popular with the utility's employees at North Anna that a similar cafeteria is planned at another nuclear plant in Jamestown, VA.

—USA TODAY

Quality in a small portion



After noticing a trend toward fewer drinks per customer, the owner of The Downtown Restaurant in New York, NY, decided to introduce half bottles of wine. Phillip Hoffman's decision to bypass wine by the glass in favor of half bottles proved successful. Today he boasts of "the largest half bottle wine list in the universe, with 42 selections."

Because Hoffman's 95-seat restaurant has extremely limited storage space, his suppliers allow him to order the half bottles in small amounts—a dozen or a half dozen at a time. The Downtown's wine list includes three sparkling and three dessert wines as well as French, Italian and Californian selections. Customers often share the bottles, which range in price from $3.50 to $19.00.

*—**Restaurants USA** interview*

Supermarkets shopping for singles

First came delis, bakeries, drugstores and travel agencies. The latest attempt by supermarkets in New Jersey, Delaware and Maryland to broaden their appeal to local markets is to sponsor singles parties. At a recent "singles night" at the Farm Fresh Supermarket in Pasadena, MD, a crowd of 150 singles munched free hors d'oeuvres, sipped tropical drinks and competed for prizes in games involving suggestive edibles.

But can one really find romance among the rutabagas? Pat McGrane, 48 years old and "definitely" in the market for a man, is optimistic. "I've noticed that even when I'm really getting food, people are more friendly, saying 'Hi' and looking you over," she says.

Even those who come up empty-handed seem to enjoy themselves. Mary Miller, a widow who says she sometimes has better luck at the local Moose Lodge, vows she'll be back to bag more than just milk and bread. "It's a nice, relaxed setting," she explains. And if there's one thing she's learned about available men, it's that "they've got to eat, don't they?"

—The Wall Street Journal

Unhitched, yes; unfed, no

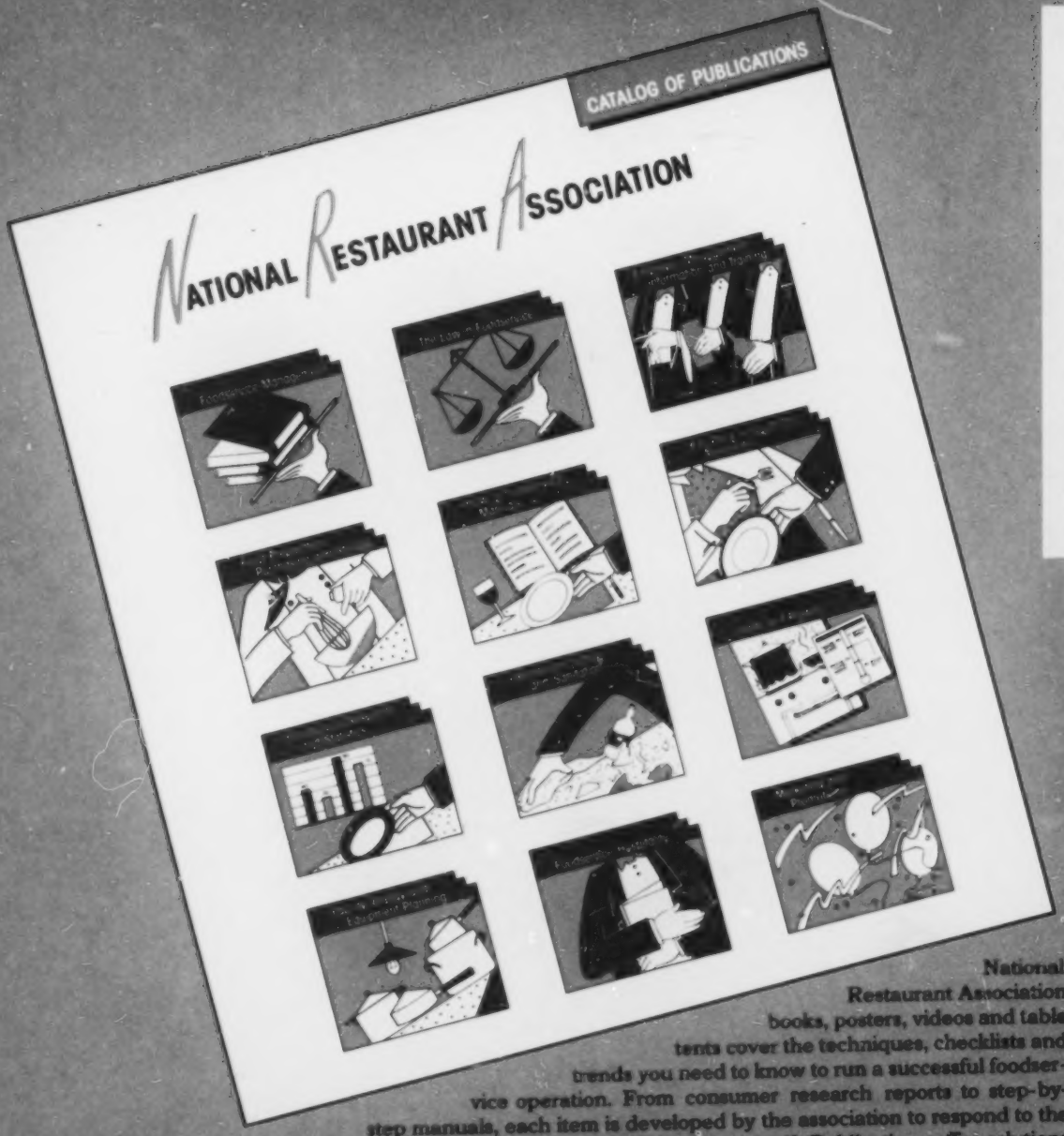
People who say there is no such thing as a free meal have not met Chicago restaurateur Billy Siegal. The owner of That Steak Joynt, a posh, Victorian-style eatery on Chicago's North Side, is offering a unique promotion—if customers can produce their divorce papers on the day they untie the knot, dinner is on the house.

Siegal is not trying to destroy the nuclear family. He simply wants "to make the divorce situation a festive occasion, instead of an unhappy situation." About 15 people have claimed divorce dinners, including a divorced couple who came in with separate dates on the same night. Under the offer, the newly divorced may order anything on the menu, from broiled or barbecue chicken at $10.95 to New York cut steak at $25.95.

Siegal, 38, has been through one divorce and is presently going through another. Will he offer his own wife a free dinner if she comes in on the day their divorce is final? "Absolutely," he says. "She's a very nice lady."

—Los Angeles Times

Order from the National Restaurant Association today. Be prepared tomorrow.



National Restaurant Association books, posters, videos and table tents cover the techniques, checklists and trends you need to know to run a successful foodservice operation. From consumer research reports to step-by-step manuals, each item is developed by the association to respond to the current needs of foodservice operators like yourself. Publications offer solutions to your nagging problems, provide insight to customer behavior and outline instruction for employee training. Best of all, NRA publications concentrate solely on the business of foodservice.

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